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ADAM

FACT • FICTION • HUMOR

OCTOBER, 1963

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RETURN TO GLORY
—page 30



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ADAM

OCTOBER • 1963

Vol 35 • No 5

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BOOBY-TRAPPED

FICTION • JAMES CAMPBELL

I had three suspects—a penniless demolition expert, a small-time hood, and a ruthless female dedicated to killing. From there on I had to work partly by deduction and partly by hunch . . .

As soon as I entered the room I knew someone had been. Someone skilled, too. Because that someone had checked everywhere for nearly-invisible threads. And, having found them, he had substituted, before leaving, new unbroken threads. Yes, he had known his job all right—I'd had all my carefully hidden threads unbroken and immediately assumed that the place was exactly as I had left it. But he hadn't reckoned on one thing: that I always kept a couple of pieces of thread hanging from two of the legs of the table. He'd seen those and had immediately concluded that they'd been tied, that somehow or another he hadn't seen the thread and that he had broken it. So he'd substituted a new one. And the second I saw that thread I knew I'd had a visitor.

I stood stock-still at the door, my eyes exploring the interior of the room. Thin character, as he'd been pretty expert in covering up that had been prowling about the room, was probably an expert in something else too—in installing a booby-trap. I mean, I figured—if he'd been out to give me the works directly he wouldn't have bothered to visit my room and then to try to cover up—he'd have caught me outside somewhere and get me then. Yes, everything pointed to the fact that a booby-trap had been rigged up inside, but where?

Now if you ever by any remote chance get to the stage when you suspect that somebody has installed a booby-trap in your room you certainly don't start looking for it! To the contrary, you take one



smart step backwards and you summon the police. But me, I couldn't summon the police. For just about two thousand reasons. And besides, I particularly wanted to find that booby-trap. Once I had found it I could render it harmless. And since I had logic that maybe I could use the thing to catch whoever had planted it on me. It was vital that I do my utmost to ascertain who had it skilled it. If I didn't, he or whoever he was working for, would try and try again to kill me. And sooner or later I'd end up on the marble slab. No doubt about it, I had to find out who'd rigged up that booby-trap.

But first of all I had to find the devilish thing itself. It could

be anywhere in the room. Absolutely anywhere. My eyes conducted a second exploratory tour while I stood there at the door. They saw nothing suspicious so I lifted my left foot to move into the room. It remained poised in mid-air before I boldly withdrew it. The carpet is nearly stuck on it before examining the thing. Two thin wires underneath a carpet, connected to the explosive. The weight of a foot on the pile causes the naked parts to make contact and . . . I felt faint. I sank down and carefully—so very carefully—lifted the edge of the carpet. Then I had to grin, despite myself. The dust that arose proved just exactly how long ago it was since that car-



pot had been lifted, or adjusted, or moved in any way. So the car-pot was definitely **OK**.

Next I moved to the small chest of drawers just to the left of the door. A bobby-merchant's delight, a chest of drawers — you can enjoy so many variations. You can have them closed and hide your connections so that when the victim opens one up he gets. Or you can leave one half-open so that when he shuts it the same thing happens. Or you can leave two just slightly open. He closes one, nothing happens — he closes the second and it does its closure the curtains. And so on.

But the chest of drawers was safe. So, moving to the right, I began to examine my bookcase.

Not a very likely place — the potential victim might go months without reading a book — but nevertheless it was essential to check it. I found it to be untouched.

On in the wash-hand basin. You'd easily spot any wires connected to the tap. I spotted none.

Halfway round the room by now, at the small recess which contained my bed. A careful and minute examination revealed nothing which might disturb my rest.

Then the small table at the window. As I was turning toward it I suddenly froze. I found that my throat had gone dry. For a full 30 seconds I stood there staring. Then I began cursing softly to

myself. What a fool! What a stupid panic-stricken fool! I almost deserved to get what had been laid on for me. For that phone on the table before me was the very first thing I should have examined.

A phone is an admirable instrument for the rigging up of a lethal bobby-trap. Almost made to measure. A simple connection with wires to the explosive and that's that. The phone itself supplies the current to detonate the charge. However, it's not very clever to fix it so that the moment the phone rings the charge goes off — the victim may not be anywhere near the thing when his number is dialled.

(Continued on page 21)



BANDITS in BIKINIS

FACT • DON SALVER

A young American soldier led a villa-full of seductive, bikini-clad water sprites on an old-fashioned gong-bomb-style raid against Germany's tank forces in Italy.

IT ended with 500 dead Nazis and a great Allied victory, but it started with an argument. "You're the only one who can do it," Lieutenant Colonel A. F. Danwoody of the OSS reported frantically as he struggled to control his temper. "Go to Hell . . . sir," Pic Louis

Montenegro replied without a moment's hesitation.

Danwoody wined, mapped his searing face and glanced across the oval-like office to OSS Major Harold Larsen.

"Picasso don't speak that way to officers in this man's army," Larsen snapped angrily.

"You can go to Hell, too, Major," said the GI. "Are you psycho? We can send you to Leavenworth for this," Larsen threatened.

"To Leavenworth?" Danwoody — but not to play with the Mafia bunches of "Lotto," Santangelo countered.

The time — the blinding hot morning of June 23, 1943.

The place — OSS HQ in Rhoete, Tunisia.

The men — two peering-in intelligence officers and an irate furious GI.

The mission — Operation Harepo, one of the most bizarre, most violent and most important spy and commando actions of World War II. Starting over to the "unconventional warfare" press of Major General "Wild Bill" Donovan's daring free-wheeling OSS Harepo was as peculiar and unlikely that not one of the Allied military personnel involved knew it at all. The problem was how to knock out 110 German Tiger tanks concealed in an underground depot only three miles from the Liota beaches where General George Patton's troops were to blast their



way ashore on the southern coast of Sicily. It was the proposed solution that — from the very beginning — beat arguments and outbursts in an unprecedented scale. "Obscene," "ridiculous" and "utterly undesirable" were some of the more charitable comments made to OSS brain-truster Dunwoody when he first submitted the plan to the Joint Anglo-American Strategy Group on the eve of the Allied invasion of Sicily. "Sheer pugnacity and dirtiness" was the more indignant judgment of one high US general.

All this was true. Operation Marpoen was more preposterous than a "C" movie and more giddy than playing poker with strangers, but neither of these were the reasons why big, bold Sansegundo behaved as stubbornly when he first learned what big, bold Dunwoody and the crewcut Air Force photo intelligence major wanted him to do. The 22-year-old private was not afraid — he was straight.

"You're asking me to play footsie with gangsters and murderers!" he accused bitterly. "I left all that Mafia filth behind when I

pulled out of Illinois, and there's no power on earth can make me volunteer for that kind of a deal. Use your B-52 bombers to clubber the caves."

"No good," Dunwoody confessed gloomily. "The reef is 30 feet of solid rock, and the Liberators and B-52s couldn't find it anyway because the camouflage is so good. Someone has to go in and you're elected."

"Nothing personal," Major Larsen added hastily, "but with your rather unusual family connections —"

The tall, thin young soldier swore an ugly and ancient Sicilian oath, a curse that surprised him as much as it disturbed the two officers, for he thought that he'd forgotten it long ago. Leo Sansegundo was a radio operator-navigator on a Sherman medium tank attached to the Third Armored, but he had not been chosen for this vital mission because of his military skills. He was the youngest and one of the most notorious Mafia chieftains in the American Midwest, a ruthless millionaire who had kidnapped, bombed and tampered-gunned his way to a

fortune over a heap of corpses. Although the lean GI had broken relations with his father four years earlier and moved away to California, it was this link with the Mafia that made him so special.

"No Allied team could reach that cave alone," the OSS officer pointed out realistically, "and only your Uncle Romeo can mobilize the so-called Brotherhood in the Liguria Region to help us."

"You've been reading too many comic books, colonel. He may be the best there, but I've never even met him," the tanker replied.

"You're of his blood, and you're the son of a Mafia Don. That should be plenty for any Sicilian who calls himself a Native," Dunwoody explained patiently. As a former narcotics cop, the 41-year-old OSS agent knew a great deal about the mysterious international crime syndicate — but he was shrewd enough to realize that any mention of this would only make the moral young GI even more hostile.

There was a long silence.

Suddenly, Larsen broke the stalemate with shock tactics.

"Let's stop kidding around. I'm



"Medic? I thought you said three miles a day?"

giving it to you straight," he told Santangelo. "We don't give a damn about how many people your old men killed, but we know that you will be murdering hundreds — maybe thousands — of your own buddies if you don't volunteer. Your division is slated to lead the first waves at Licata."

The Pfc sighed as he realized that he had no choice.

"Okay. Okay. I hate your guts . . . sir . . . but I volunteer for Operation Harpoon," he surrendered.

That afternoon, Pfc Santangelo was introduced to the smiling, soft-spoken British explosives expert who was to be his partner. Lieutenant William Cedric Dixen was a veteran "bomber" with an excellent sense of humor and an outstanding record of demolitions. Broad, Oxford-educated and urbane, Dixen was an ex-playboy who really enjoyed his work.

"Should be a good show," he predicted merrily as the four men went over the aerial photos and the sand-box model of the coastal cliffs west of the port of Licata.

"With more than 2000 German troops from the 17th Paraders all over the area! You must be out of your head!" Lou Santangelo answered curtly.

"Piece of cake," the Englishman reassured them, "especially if the private obeys my orders."

Lt. Colonel Dunswoody cleared his throat noisily and lit another cigar.

"Ah . . . well, that's not exactly the setup," he announced. "For special reasons that must be obvious, you'll have to follow his orders. He's in command."

wanted to get it over with as soon as possible.

By the time they boarded the Royal Navy submarine at 7:00 pm on the模模樣樣 night of the 27th, Santangelo and the good-humored Englishmen were on first name terms. Dixen had the panache that a lifetime of wealth brings, plus the confidence that came from four previous sabotage jobs behind enemy lines. As the submarine rumbled north through the minefields and headed toward Sicily, Dixen slept easily with his head resting on the waterproof sack that concealed his 88 pounds of plastic explosives. Lou Santangelo listened to him snore, and the young American couldn't help but smile. "Willie" Dixen seemed like a sophisticated or silly fool, but it was clear that he had the guts of a 20th-century Scarlet Pimpernel. The gangster's son had placed his own courage in a dozen tank battles from Rossingue Gap to the capture of Tunis, but he was still uneasy about the weird project that OSS had code-named Operation Harpoon. Troubled by the awareness that he was a combat soldier with no clear-and-danger experience, he barely slept.

At 2:00 am the submarine pulled up the periscope cautiously and the mustachioed skipper pointed toward the Sicilian shore for some landmarks.

After considerable study of the charts and recent photos, the naval officer concluded that they were about four miles from the rendezvous zone where the Underground agents were to meet them. Santangelo and the demolitions expert checked their gear as the undersea craft glided further west at a cautious five knots, and they barely had time to gulp down mugs



of hot tea laced with rum before a pink-cheeked enough told them to present to the caption tower.

It was nearly 4:00 a.m. when the submarine slowly rose to the surface and a dozen sneaker-shod sailors scampered quietly up the ladder to man the deck guns. Santangelo and the Royal Navy skipper followed a few moments later, studied the rocky coast thoughtfully and waited for the light signal that OSS had promised would appear. Nothing happened, and the tanned young American began to sweat.

The lone US armor veteran saw it. Four dots . . . two dashes . . . three dots . . . one dash. He tapped the naval officer on the arm as it was repeated, and the skipper raised his own binoculars to that beach the prearranged counter-sign. A few minutes later, the two Allied agents were loading their socks into an inflated life raft tethered to the submarine. The sea was calm but the night was hot, and they were damp with perspiration by the time they cut the lines and began paddling the quarter mile in shore.

Before they covered 100 yards, Lou Santangelo heard a gurgling splashing noise behind him and turned around swiftly. The undersea radar had submerged. The two spy-commandos were alone on the blackened surface of the ancient Mediterranean.

They slipped furtively into the darkness of the cove, but could detect no movement. The American unbuckled his jacket, loosened the special alienor 22 in his shoulder holster and wondered why he had ever left his solid steel-balled tank. "Get ready," Dixon warned softly as the breakers spun the rubberized raft, and then their flimsy craft crunched on the sand of the beach.

Moving exactly as they had rehearsed, the two men jumped out and snarly dragged the float up out of the water. Santangelo grabbed the rapidly firing Bren gun his partner handed him, sprinted 30 yards inland and took up a covering position behind two small bushes. The English demolition pros began to move the socks away from the water, crawling low to offer the minimum silhouette to any enemy machinegun. It was all going smoothly, but there was still no sign of the Underground contact named "Pietro" who was supposed to meet them.

Suddenly, Santangelo smelled a strong provocative scent, erotic, feminine, pure woman. He spun around instantly with his finger on the trigger of his submachine gun.

There she was.

Five feet away.
Tall and young and lovely.
Barefooted.

Smiling, with a .32 caliber Beretta automatic in her left hand and a flashlight in her right.

Not quite naked, but close enough to be in a handkerchief-sized bikini.

"Pittsburgh," she said in the musical voice of a teenage girl.



"Would you mind pulling the shade down? How much do you think a guy can take?"

"Cleveland," he responded mechanically with the recognition code although he couldn't quite believe what he was saying.

He stared at her uncled beauty for a long moment — until she laughed.

"Pietro?" he asked incredulously.

"No, but you may call me Angela, Captain," she replied in barely accented English.

Santangelo nodded to himself. It figured. Operation Harpoon — in Italy from the beginning. Getting closer every second. It was going to become a lot stranger before it was over. He unlit her ebony perfume again, swallowed hard and waved back toward his partner. The British snarled up from the shade quickly, took one comprehensive glance that surveyed every inch of her exquisite anatomy and grinned in friendly approval.

"Won't you introduce me to your uncle?" Willie Dixon asked nonchalantly.

"This . . . this . . . is Pietro."

the earnest young GI exploded. "You Yanks certainly know how to fight a war, sir," the sapper lieutenant countered with a rock- ing salute.

"This is not the time or place to talk, sergeant," the Sicilian girl interrupted. "Collect your gear and follow me at once. Come quickly, for these beauties are patrolled by Teutonic soldiers with dogs."

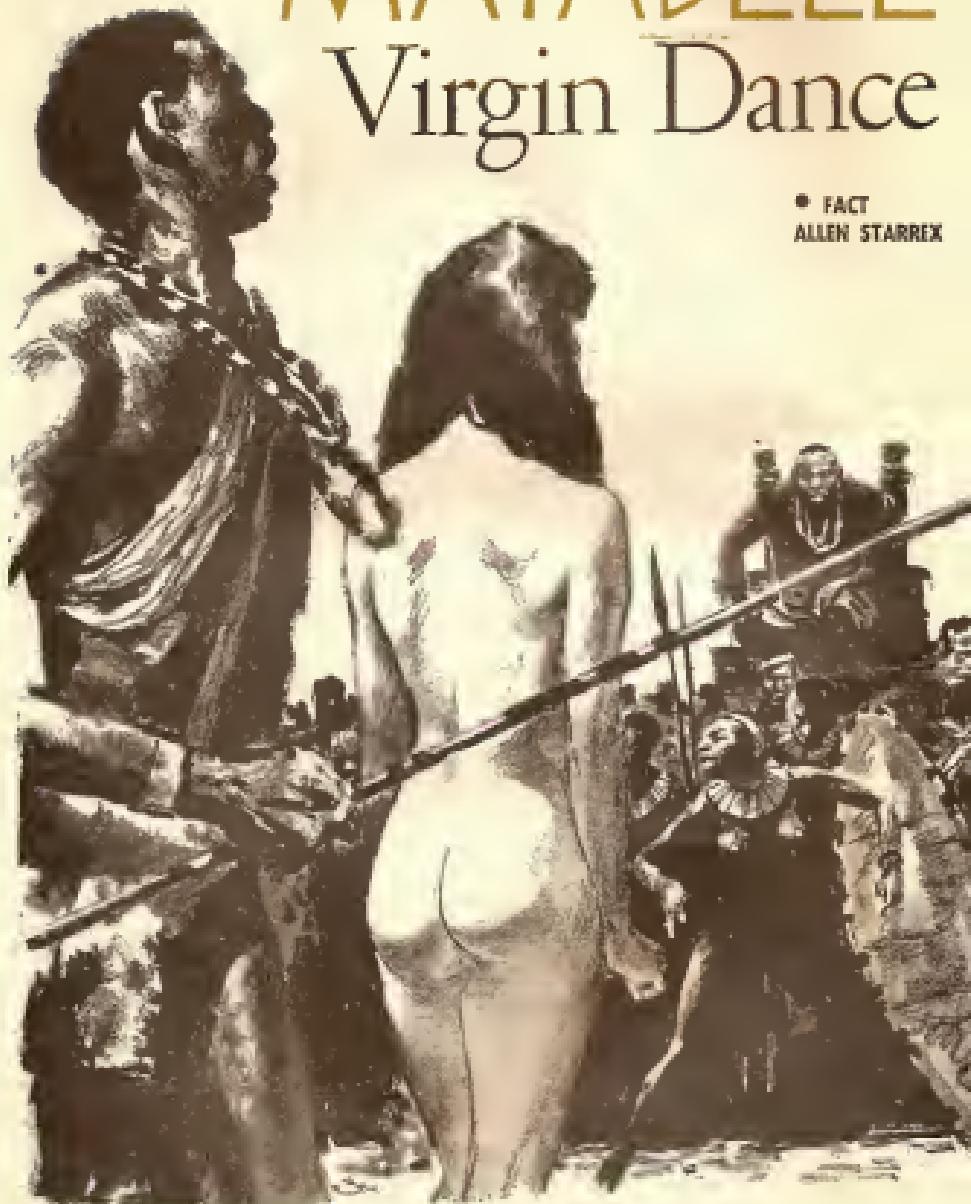
Her mention of German troops terminated the conversation abruptly. The two Allied operatives donned and concealed the suit, picked up their gear and obediently trudged after her to the path at the bottom of the cliff. Shapely Angela led the way up the narrow winding route, and her swaying stride was so fascinating that Lou Santangelo had to force himself to concentrate on the hauls during Operation Harpoon. Without warning, those abysmal dangers became an urgent reality as the Sicilian beauty turned a corner in the trail and gasped.

(Continued on page 22)

MATABELE

Virgin Dance

• FACT
ALLEN STARREK



Kurt and Evelyne von Brandt were the only outsiders ever to watch the pagan orgy of the Matsabé virgin dancers to celebrate King Labengula's "diamond" ritual.

THEY sinuous creak of the 20 drums split the humid African night air with the splattering bark of a hundred handgongs exploding in precision-timed sequence.

With every snap of a drummer's hand on the drumhead there also came the rhythm of a warrior chant and the jangle of trumpet beats slapping against an undulating bamboo-tail kilt of a white-plumed soldier of the skin-wart Matsabé — the toughest fighter in Africa. The Matsabés were led by the strongest rulers, black or white, ever to live in the deep bush country of the Dark Continent.

To the trained eye of the blood fair-skinned man who stood to one side of the whirling, dancing, chanting natives the scene unfolded as a terrifying, raging spectacle of the raw, alien culture of Africa. But the man wasn't looking at the drama on the

dance — he stared at something else.

Across the stockade stood a crude but strong cage, about 3 ft by 7 ft in diameter. Its spindly bamboo bars were secured by heavy strings of antelope hide. Inside the cage was a dark-skinned, fair-skinned young woman. Her long black hair, which was usually neatly tied back in a bun, now hung down the sides of her face, spread itself across her smooth shoulders and draped itself as natural cover over her bare bosom.

Like the blond man across the stockade, the girl's eyes were riveted on a single object. But unlike him, she gazed at the far end of the huge, oblong structure. There blazed a row of six torches, unearthing their firebeams down on an fantastic a scene as ever witnessed by white man — or woman. On a beautifully carved chair of ebony sat a huge, strangely clad man. On his head was a crown of leopard skin. The upper half of his body was naked, except for a dazzling necklace which wound around his massive throat and fell in two strands down his chest.

His thighs were covered by the traditional bamboo-tail kilt, which was the trademark of the Matsabé. He sat in the great ebony chair in regal splendor. In his right hand was a large powder mug, from which he sipped. The eyes finally took in the entire spectacle before him. Then, as always, he turned his attention to some-

thing going on at the foot of the stockade ridge.

To the wild tempo of the drums and the dancing chanting warriors of the Matsabé, writhed the finest specimens of the tribe's womanhood. They were the choice of the lot, the firm and youthful virgins whose beauty had given them great honor in this primitive society. They had been chosen as future wives of the greatest Matsabé of them all — the omnipotent Labengula, King-Slayer of the Matsabé and the most powerful potentate in all of Africa. He was considered by European powers as the last stumbling-block to complete white conquest of the continent.

As Labengula peered down from his stony throne, the young girls swayed to the savage beat of the drums, vulgar flexing bodies glowing in the twilight. This was the scene the girl in the cage was watching.

As the tempo of the drums increased, so did the movement of the virgins at Labengula's feet. In the cage, the girl's face contorted like lips poised back sharply, and six soft strange sensations flicked through her own body. She was born by the blood of two continents, which at that moment were fighting a raging war within her. Her Christian name was Evelyne Broux. Her father had been a French soldier-adventurer who came to Africa for conquest and himself was conquered by a Zulu beauty Broux, a man of honor as well as strength, defied the law of the white man and took a Zulu wife. Evelyne was the result.

Raised in a French school in the Congo, she was trained as a white and treated as one because her father was a powerful man. At the age of 18 she married the blond man across the stockade. His name was Kurt von Brandt, and he was a Swiss-German engineer-explorer who had offered his services to an English genius named Cecil Rhodes. It was this service which had brought Evelyne and Kurt to this dangerous and terrible night.

Across the stockade Kurt suddenly uttered an oath in German and, with every muscle in his body, tried to move toward the cage. The effort failed, for Kurt was bound securely hand and foot to a 3-foot stake. The two Matsabé warriors who stood on either side of the young engineer paid little attention to his efforts. They knew he couldn't get away, and they continued to watch the dance, which now was reaching a climax.

The Matsabé warriors were forming ranks in the centre of the stockade. They moved with rigid, rhythmic steps like lions to attack, their song now reaching bellow proportions.

They were moving to the end-





"I wish you'd stop that screaming, I'm trying to sleep!"

one of the drums toward the throne area. To the right of the throne, on a raised platform covered with a hummock, sat the Matsobela generals and wise men of the tribe. They were surrounded by a hove of lovely girls who painted Matsobela, a potent rice beer, into powder traps similar to the one used by Lobengula himself. The traps were emptied almost at once after every hit.

The signal was given. Lobengula's male secretary, who was dressed in a Western-style white cotton suit, snapped an order, and the pace de resistance of the evening's revelry was about to begin.

Lobengula rose shakily from his ebony throne. Two of the king's robes (royal guard) stepped forward to support the great ruler. He threw them off and, walking like a man on a tightrope, stepped over a living carpet of the prostrated bodies of the young virgins onto a second raised platform. The only piece of furniture on the platform was a beautiful leopard-skin couch.

The famed Matsobela ritual of the diamonds was underway.

The drums changed tempo into a throbong, steady roar as the drummers began a heavy marching selection. Even the chair changed into a basso-pitched hum. Another order came from the secretary. Two warriors raced across the platform straight for the engine. Kuti was yelling now, but he couldn't be heard above the din. He writhed under the pressure of the bonds, but he couldn't shake them off. His eyes were glazed with fear and hate, and he struggled against unbreakable chains. He was strapped, but he kept his glazed eyes on his wife in the cage across the arena.

The two warriors had reached the cage now, and quickly untied the thongs holding the bars. The girl stepped back almost to the rear of the cage, but she didn't run. She stood straight her back arched and her eyes wide as the warrior's simile hands opened the barred cage door.

The cage open, the warriors suddenly stepped back, one on either side. Without a word the girl stepped between them, and the three moved toward the platform on which King Lobengula

lay stretched on his leopard couch. The girl walked swiftly, the roaring drums matching her steps. The two Matsobela virgins kept pace, but dropped slightly behind her.

As she reached the platform, she turned, and for a moment she looked straight at her husband tied to the stake. Her face was a mask.

Kuti screamed again, but the drums drowned out the cry.

As the girl turned back to the platform, two of the young Matsobela virgins quickly spread a second leopard skin next to, but slightly below, the one occupied by the king.

The girl, her black hair streaming and her white body glistening with perspiration, stopped forward and lay full-length on the leopard skin. As she did so, the Matsobela virgin stepped forward. Both the king and the white woman were anointed with a perfume prepared from sandalwood and oil.

Now a dozen members of the royal guard began unlocking a battery of ancient iron gates which lined the back wall of the royal chamber. As the heavy doors cracked open on their rusty hinges, thousands of glittering, moist blue-white diamonds spilled into walking socks. From other sacks, additional thousands of British sovereigns came pouring out.

As a guard filled his goat-sack, he would race to the platform. There he would pour the jewels and gold coins in heaps over the recumbent monarch; others did the same to the white girl at his side. Within minutes both were virtually buried beneath the treasure.

Only the rise and fall of their breathing indicated they were alive. High above the din was a new chant, this one from the platform filled with diamonds and treasure. They chanted the king's name. They chanted his unmatched wealth.

The drums pounded savagely, so wildly that any sadness was lost. There was nothing but a massive boom of hands on drumsheads and the screams of the chant. Two such boars moved forward and placed their blaring lights at each end of the platform. The piles of diamonds and gold shot glittering sparks across the stocks.

The larger pile on the couch suddenly exploded. The king burst through his diamond grave and stood on the couch, the diamonds and gold still covering him up to his knees. As he spread his arms to the heavens, the drums rolled out one last resounding boom and the warriors screamed a final tribute. Lobengula the magnificent, Lobengula the indomitable, was in his glory.

The big research stepped across the glittering pile and prodded beneath the dirt, covering the white woman. Slowly, almost tenderly, he scooped away the stones and helped her to her feet.

just as the drums and the chant abruptly ended. As the two stood quietly in the twilight, only the sets of Kurt, laid in the stocks, could be heard in the compound.

Lobengula bowed to the woman. She returned the courtesy. The long steward a commandant and the girl was led away. But not to the cage the had occupied before. She went instead to a thatch-covered house at the far end of the compound. There, a woman slave bathed her and left her to sleep on a couch of fur.

Back in the centre of the stockade, the two Matabele warriors guarding Kurt cut him loose from the stocks and led him quickly to the hut occupied by his wife. The man layed down at the girl sleeping peacefully on the fur pallet. She breathed evenly, deeply. There was a smile on her face.

Kurt slept openly as he dropped beside her. And then, strangely, he too slept.

Kurt and Eyvette von Brandt had participated in the most fantastic pagan ceremony ever carried out in Africa. It was so strange, so horrifying in its implications, that neither could fully comprehend. Only Eyvette's Zulu blood had answered its call.

They had come as messengers bearing gifts of gold from Cecil Rhodes. Lobengula had promised that no harm would come to them.

They had left the headquarters of Rhodes' great Kimberley mines to travel deep into the Matabele bush. They had been scarcely out of the site when the Matabele produced the cage. The natives had fallen on von Brandt, stripped and bound him. Eyvette had



"Go to hell!"

been placed in the cage.

They had entered Lobengula's capital city as prisoners, expecting the worst. Now, after the strange and terrible night of the diamond ritual, they slept an exhausted sleep.

Lobengula also slept, surrounded by his wives and slaves. He was an undisputed king of a great domain. And he was still the hab-

wark of African independence. Lobengula's fame was so great, in fact, that Britain's Queen Victoria corresponded with him and sent him an autographed picture of herself on one occasion and an ornate chair on another.

A man of massive frame, Lobengula was also a fearless fighter and a stern monarch. To symbolise his authority and enforce discipline among his subjects, he frequently resorted to mass purges of the Ndebele sort, despatching recalcitrant tribesmen with the royal assent, the symbol of sovereignty. Although he was considered only semi-educated, Lobengula displayed a marked capacity for governing his people and possessed a shrewd political skill in dealing with whites.

Lobengula secretly distrusted the whites, but he allowed them to come into his country and treated them in a friendly fashion as long as they stayed his land and respected his sovereignty. The Matabele king had a great respect for Cecil Rhodes, who appeared to be less ruthless than other invaders of Africa.

But more than anything else, Lobengula was interested in Rhodes' diamond mines at Kimberley, the world's richest diamond fields, discovered the year Lobengula was made king.

Lobengula's method of obtaining a large share of these diamonds, his weird "diamond rite", and the accumulation of wealth beyond that of any other ruler in Africa at the time, all make for a fascinating story, and one familiar to nearly every South African schoolboy.

(Continued on page 20)



"You did call at an unusual time. I was just about to give baby a bottle!"

"HE'S TOO GOOD -

So said a heavyweight fighter some 25 years ago when he received a hard right to the jaw. And this is only one of the many comical incidents related around the ringside . . .

IT was the most terrible fight on record, this fight between two legions men. The idea of it was revolting — the outcome of it was diabolical.

The fight took place in Melbourne in the '20s and was the brain-child of a publican named Stimpson, an Englishman who came to Australia, made his fortune with sheep, set himself up in a hotel and indulged in his passion of boxing. His participation in the sport took the form of backing his friends. He made out a lot of money backing Bill Farman who became the first heavyweight glove champion of Australia by knocking out Peter Jackson in three rounds. But Stimpson lost a lot of money in repeatedly backing Stankly, a popular fighter who fought everybody and beat practically nobody.

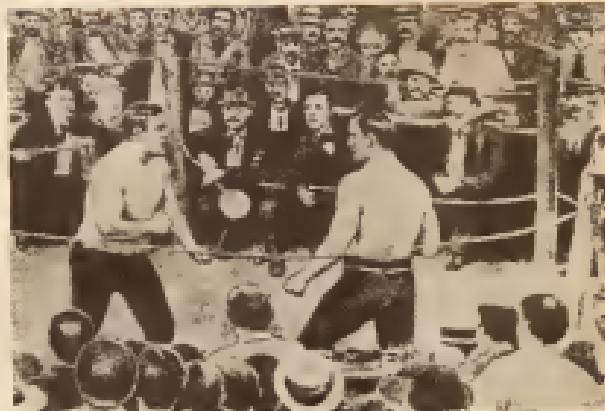
A customer at Stimpson's pub was a man named Jack Stankly who prided himself as a bantam-puncher. Stankly had a deep chest, broad shoulders and remarkable agility — considering he had no legs from the knees down!

He had lost his legs in an accident — a kickball had crossed his pins — and had leather cups fitted to the stumps. He was described as a "nearly-abbreviated man".

There arrived in town a Jamaican negro named Sambo who had been run over in New York by a tram, the accident causing him to lose his legs below the knees. Sambo was a beggar who did shoe-shining when he could and lived on the generosity of others when business was slack. He arrived in Melbourne on a tramp steamer.

Stimpson heard of him and the idea of a boxing match between Sambo and Stankly immediately appealed to the belligerent side of his nature. Quickly and quietly the match was arranged — quickly, in case Sambo left town sooner — quietly, because the contest would not have been allowed by law.

A ring was pitched in a barn at the rear of Stimpson's hotel. A crowd of 30 attended to witness the bout.



An artist's impression of the fight between John L. Sullivan and John Kilkenny, which took place on July 8, 1889. The text 'SULLIVAN' is written across the bottom of the image.

The man, stripped to the waist, with white trunks extending to the leather cups of their stumps and strengthen about their waists, presented a strange, abhorrent, yet fascinating picture. Both were broad but on short.

The referee was the editor of a local newspaper. The fight was to be conducted under Queenberry Rules. Each wore two-ounce gloves.

From the start it could be seen that Stankly was by far the more energetic, but the negro seemed to have more strength and ferocity. For the first two minutes of the first round Sambo stood on unbroken supports, swinging both hands. Stankly witnessed the onslaught, parrying the blows and occasionally scoring with counter punches.

A right to the nose dropped Sambo flat on his back. He sat up immediately and placing his gloved hand on the floor, swung his body clear and dropped onto his stomach.

The second, third, fourth and fifth rounds were savagely contested, with knockdowns frequent and points about even. In the sixth session Stankly drove a left to Sambo's mouth, knocking out several teeth and severing the black man onto one of the ring posts.

As Sambo bounced back off the post, Stankly uppercut him, breaking his jaw. Sambo went down but bounced up in a rage. Crazed, he precipitated towards his opponent on hands and stumps. The referee called to him, "That's foul fighting!" But Sambo ignored him. As he came up to Stankly, he grappled

with him, then deliberately pressed his right thumb into Stankly's left eye, gouging it almost out.

In agony, Stankly let out a scream, fastened his teeth into Sambo's neck and bit deeply and tore out a piece of flesh. The negro's blood spattered across the ring. The referee, seconds and spectators hopped into the ring and dragged the combatants apart.

Fortunately, there was a doctor in the audience. His prompt action saved Sambo from bleeding to death. But Stankly's eye could not be saved.

It took all Stimpson's influence to keep the bout a secret. Both boxers were kept in seclusion for several weeks until their wounds healed. Sambo was given a few pounds and shipped to New Zealand. Stankly was handsomely provided for by Stimpson and a few other rich men who attended the gruesome spectacle.

Boxing history is studded with unusual fights and unusual incidents, though fortunately there is no record of any duplication of the Stankly-Sambo battle. But October 4, 1923 is a date that Mike McTigue always remembered. Mike was an Irishman who won the world light-heavyweight title from the hated Sonnyboy Battling Bill.

Poor, illiterate Bill defended his title against McTigue in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day, 1922. Reports having Dublin said that McTigue was a class poorer decision and possibly he did, but Bill did receive warnings prior to the fight.

Running up a phenomenal re-

I QUIT!"

SPORT • RAY MITCHELL



Jack Dempsey, the pugilistic king of Toledo, in the plumed cap of his generation — black derby and fur-collar coat.

cord in Georgia was a young man named Young Stribling, who, at the time of McTigue's coronation, was a lightweight. A syndicate of men in Columbus, Georgia, wanted to give Stribling his chance at the world title, so Major Paul Jones, a member of the syndicate, went to New York to get McTigue's signature on a contract.

McTigue's manager, Joe Jacobs, was a shrewd man with a dollar. He also was a cautious soul. He examined the offer made to Stribling, made some counter offers regarding money and results, then accepted the fight.

Jones agreed to the terms, one of which was that Jacobs take his own referee, a custom in those days.

The party arrived in Columbus a few days before the bout but McTigue injured his hand and asked for a postponement. Jones said he would send a doctor to McTigue's room to examine the hand and if the doc said there was need for a postponement, such postponement would be granted.

Late that afternoon, seven men entered McTigue's room. All claimed to be doctors. All examined the hand. All pronounced it OK. McTigue protested. He was told to look out of the window.

Possibly, the champion did so. Outside he saw a tree with a rope over a bough — at the end of the rope was a noose. A few men stood around and nodded at the tree.

McTigue was annoyed, more than afraid. He ordered the men out of the room and said if they did not grant a postponement,



Light-heavyweight Young Stribling was awarded the fight against Mike McTigue in Georgia on October 4, 1922, when the Klu Klux Klan changed the decision against McTigue.

there would not be a fight.

Soon afterwards McTigue heard noises outside. He looked out and saw men carrying placards which read: "Fight, or fight. No fight and you leave Columbus in a box."

Savagely, McTigue said he would fight, providing a doctor gave him a needle to deaden the pain. This was done.

It was not a particularly good

bout and at the end of the bout referee Harry Erie, looked to Joe Jacobs for instructions. Jacobs waved his hands across his body, signalling a draw, a verdict which would keep McTigue the champion and save a riot. Erie awarded a draw but the verdict did not save a riot. Klu Klux Klan members moved menacingly toward the ring and Major Jones hastily changed the verdict to a win for Stribling. The crowd cheered their "champion." Erie, McTigue and Jacobs left Columbus as fast as possible.

Once out of town, Erie cabled New York newspapers that McTigue and Stribling had posed a draw. That was the official verdict and that is how it appears in the record books.

Another out-of-town fight featuring a world champion brought repercussions which will live longer than McTigue's dash with the KKK. That was the bout between Jack Dempsey and Tommy Gibbons at a small town named Shelby, in Montana, on American Independence Day, 1922. Shelby tried to show its independence that day but it was not of use.

Sam Sampson was the man who had the know-how to match Dempsey in a world title fight at Shelby. Sam had his hour of glory — and he had a lifetime of regret.

Sam was a sharpshooter in Shelby, a town with 300 inhabitants. He thought Shelby had a future and he thought the best way to make people conscious of the existence of the town was to promote a world heavyweight title fight.

Sam put Shelby on the map, all right. It became as well known as Chicago or New York. But...

The townspeople of Shelby called a meeting. Everyone was keen on the idea and in eight days a sum of \$22,000 (Australian) was raised. Then the Mayor asked Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, what money he wanted for



Dempsey to defend his title against Tommy Gibbons, a leading contender. Kearns wanted \$10,000 — and refused to bargain. Gibbons said he would accept 50 percent of the gate after Dempsey was paid.

In three weeks an arena was built. It was big enough to hold 40,000 persons. Then Kearns demanded his \$10,000 in advance. The demand paralysed Shelby and portion of the money was offered to Kearns.

Kearns accepted the portion of the guarantee on the proviso that the whole promotion was handed to him and his friend Dan McKeithan. Shelby had to agree.

Came the night of the fight. The box office held \$20,000. This sum, plus the \$22,000 already given to Kearns represented Dempsey's guarantee. The crowd was smaller than anticipated.

The fight was not spectacular. Dempsey won on points — the only time in his career that he fought so many as 15 rounds in one fight.

The citizens of Shelby were faced with an unpaid-for arena and no return from the fight — Dempsey and his party had the lot.

The fight that broke the bank at Shelby, Montana, on Independence Day (July 4), 1922, Jack Dempsey (left) defeated Tommy Gibbons over 15 rounds.

Gibbons gained nothing but experience. Dempsey, Kearns and McKeithan slept the night in a basement beneath a shop — with an armed guard on the door. All down next day the trio, accompanied by the sheriff and his deputies, went to the railway station where the visitors hired a one-carriage train to take them out of Shelby.

Shelby was not lucky enough to get just nothing out of the fight. The citizens were in hock up to their eyebrows. The town's three banks went broke. The town never regained its small prosperity.

Yes, Shelby was put on the map — and off it. But it did become well known!

From one of the greatest of heavyweight champions to one of the greatest heavyweight champions is a big hop in weight, but the heavyweight champion in question — Jimmy Wilde — also figured in a

fight where his opponent received no money. That fight took place in England on January 19, 1921. His opponent was Pete Herman.

Two Americans conceived the idea of matching Wilde, the Welsh wizard who held the world heavyweight title (weight from eight stone) with American Herman who held the world featherweight title (weight from eight stone six). The Yanks knew that such a bout held in England would draw a full house at big prices. So they hired the Royal Albert Hall, London, and instructed each fighter \$2000 — with Herman's feather title at stake.

Wilde — cautious soul — insisted that his \$2000 be deposited in his bank account. He signed his contract after the money matter was settled. Herman also was a cautious soul — but in another way. He defended his title against fellow American, Joe Lynch on December 22, 1920 — three weeks before the scheduled Wilde fight.

Herman lost his title to Lynch — or did he just lose it until after his return from England? Because after the Wilde bout Herman returned to America and beat Lynch for the title!

Of course, there was quite a

row when Lynch reached London without the title. The promoters pointed out that Pete was supposed to defend his title against White and how could he do that when he didn't have it?

"A non-title fight does not draw as much money as a title fight," the promoters pointed out to Herman. "So," they said, "we'll pay you only £2000."

"The contract calls for £2000," protested Herman.

"Sure it does," agreed the promoters. "The whole thing will look good in court. The contract calls for you to defend your title against White. Now you haven't a title. You broke the contract."

Herman saw the point and agreed to £2000... payable after the fight.

That seemed to end that, but on the day of the fight Herman told the promoters that he wanted his money before the fight or there would be no fight. He said too, that unless he got the full £2000 on the spot, there still would be no fight.

The promoters began to sweat. It was one thing calling off the fight a couple of weeks before-hand — it was another cancelling it on the day of the bout, with all the tickets sold. They agreed, Herman demanded cash. They didn't have it with them. Would Pete take a cheque? Yes, Pete had to be satisfied with a cheque.

Herman grabbed the cheque and went to the bank. It was after 3 pm — the bank was closed.

That night White hopped onto the scales and tipped the beam at seven stone four — his usual weight. He asked to see Herman weighed. The promoters told him Pete had weighed in at two o'clock

and that he weighed 8d.

White protested. He pointed out that the contract called for a ringside weigh-in.

"You did," agreed the promoters, "but Herman would not sign unless he weighed in at two o'clock."

White fumed. He knew that Herman would enter the ring at about 8d. He flatly refused to fight.

The promoters began to panic. Another big fight was billed for that program — between British heavyweight Bomber Billy Wells and American Battling Levinsky, former world light-heavyweight champion — and the fight fell through, the crowd being notified to that effect only after they had taken their seats.

Word quickly spread that White had refused to fight. A riot was imminent. At that point the Prince of Wales sent word to White that he wanted to see the fight. "For the Prince I will fight," said Jimmy and out he went to the ring.

White looked sick. When the Prince saw that he advised the Mighty Atom not to fight, but White was adamant.

Jimmy White was a spent force. No longer was he the wizard he had been and in the 15th round the referee stopped the fight, calling Jimmy in his corner and said to him: "Jimmy, you never did know when to stay down."

The next morning at 10 o'clock, Pete Herman presented his cheque at the bank. The cheque bounced! Herman raced out looking for the promoters. They too, had bounced — right out of England. Herman never did get his money.

White was concerned in another

fight with unusual difficulties. That was against British feather-weight Joe Conn who weighed nine stone. Conn was considered the best featherweight in England, even though he wasn't champion.

The bout was booked for August 11, 1918. But there was a fly in the ointment — White was in the Army, thus he could receive no money from a fight. Of course, Jimmy refused to fight without payment.

Then someone had a brainwave — why not give Mrs. White a present of diamonds — £2000 worth? Jimmy agreed.

But a further hitch occurred — the British Police went out on strike on the day of the fight! It was the first and only time it happened in England. How could the police be controlled? Who would control the crowds going to the fight?

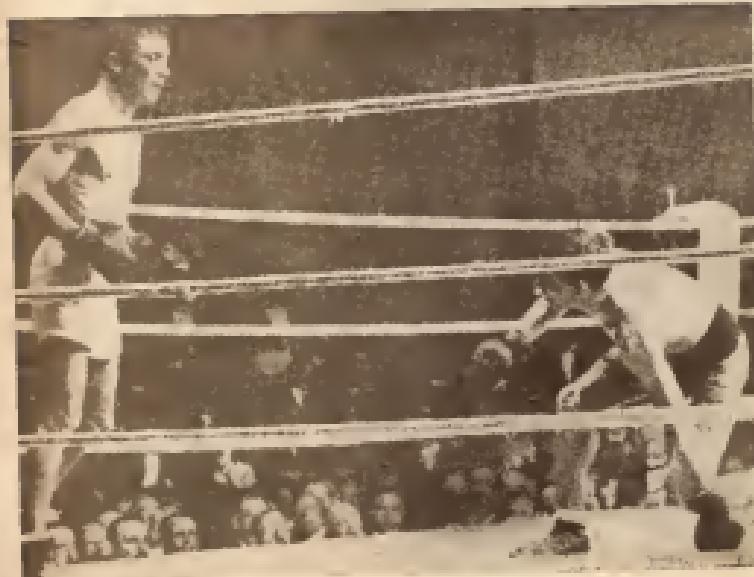
The promoter pulled a few strings and on the night of the fight 700 soldiers from military hospitals and the police duty.

White won the fight by a knuckle out in the 12th round. Mrs. White received her £2000 in diamonds and everybody was happy. The day after the fight, Mrs. White traded her diamonds for £2000 in cash.

It gives us a good feeling when we do good turns for others. Sam Russell, former British fighter, later referee, was one who got that feeling often. He raised thousands of pounds for charities.

He was a late convert of several hospitals. So when he saw former fighter Alf Mansfield down on his luck, Sam experienced that familiar glow — he would help Alf.

Mansfield had been a good



The Prince of Wales sent word to Jimmy White that he wanted to see his match with Pete Herman (left). Herman won hands down — but collected no money!

fighter — he had lost 20, 10 and 12 pounds with White. Now he was blind and broke. Russell told Mansfield that he would run a benefit for him. Mansfield was overjoyed. Sam made the arrangements. He was given the London Pavilion, rent free, by C. B. Cochran. He formed a committee, arranged for boxers and vaudeville artists to appear and made several hundred pounds for Mansfield, which Sam handed over to the former fighter, together with full accounts of money paid and money received.

Mansfield should have been overcome with joy. He wasn't. He refused to accept the accounts given and charged that Russell had not paid him all the money to which he was entitled! Mansfield took the matter to court. He lost. He pursued it to the High Court. But the hearing had

not gone for when he withdrew all the charges.

Mr. Francis Newbold, in discharging the action, said the case was "improper, unprofitable and unnecessary." Russell was cleared completely of any stain on his honor.

The court has been called upon to give verdicts *standing out* of fight decisions and often needed for boxing commissions. Last year the New York Athletic Commission stripped Paul Pender of his world middleweight title and gave recognition to Dick Tiger as champion. Pender took the matter to court. He won his case. But he has not been able to force the New York Athletic Commission to reinstate him as champion. In fact, all world boxing commissions have refused to recognize Paul as champion since his stripping by the NYAC.

On January 31, 1921, American

semimiddleweight Pussey O'Gatty beat Roy Moore on a foul in three rounds. The next day the New York Athletic Deputy Commissioner, Walter Block, withheld O'Gatty's purse, changed the decision of the bout to "no contest" and suspended O'Gatty, his manager and the referee for 90 days.

O'Gatty and his manager, Jimmy Twyford, instigated legal proceedings against the Commission for interfering with the referee's decision. O'Gatty and Twyford won the case and O'Gatty was paid.

On December 18, 1922, Joey Gardello received a split points decision over Billy Graham in a middleweight fight at Madison Square Garden. Commissioners Bob Christaberry and G. H. Powell changed the scorecard of one of the judges thus giving the verdict to Graham. Gardello took the matter to court.

The court ruled in favor of Gardello and that is how the verdict reads in the record books — Gardello outpointed Graham.

Leaving the courts and returning to the ring, boxing was banned at various times in the past — but banning did not prevent the sport taking place. On July 8, 1888, John L. Sullivan defended his world bare knuckle championship against John Kilrain at Highbridge, Missouri. Sullivan won by KO in the 11th round. It was the last world bare knuckle heavyweight championship.

Kilrain was arrested for taking part in a prize fight and sentenced to two months in jail. A peculiar rule of the day allowed prisoners to be farmed out — at a price — to work for the buyer. John was "bought" by someone in New Orleans — a state where boxing was legal — and while still a prisoner, Kilrain fought and won a fight for which he collected \$100 dollars.

Bare knuckle fighting and boxing with gloves are as far apart as the poles. The style of fighting was different, the ring was different, the rules were different, the training was different. But one method of training I saw detailed in an old 1880 newspaper was unorthodox even for the bare knuckle days. Bare it is verbatim from that paper:

"The White Star of Texas is now in training to enter the prize ring. He will fight Gopher Bill in this city next Monday night for \$1000 dollars, and after the fight intends to knock out Sullivan for \$10,000 dollar stakes. At present The Star is undergoing the most remarkable course of training on record. This week he has been walked around Franklin Square with a dumb bell fastened to each leg; the has had low-water baths in a tub, and has had his legs beaten black and blue with bilboard rods.

"Today he was hatched to a small cart and trotted three miles. After that a beer barrel was tied



Snowy Clancy, who was Cyclone Johnson Thompson's second in his match against Tim Land, consistently harped about referee "Snowy" Baker's handling of the fight.

to one leg and a dumb-bell to the other, and he walked a mile. Then he was again beaten with bamboo rods, and disappears from head to foot. His diet is bananas. For drink he is given a mixture of brown stout, mustard, gin, vinegar, molasses, soda-water and pepper sauce. His name is Harry Snagg."

With that kind of training he would be a drag only to himself! Don't know how he got on with Gopher Bill but he never fought John L. Sullivan.

There was a time when Big Pat Comiskey was being touted as "the next heavyweight champion of the world." Mike Baer put a stop to that when he skinned the big Irishman in the first round in 1909. Up to then Big Pat had won 25 of his 30 fights by knockout.

Pat carried on after the Baer fight and by the end of 1921 he had had 87 fights in his career, winning 57 by KO. The fat could punch.

It is his last fight in 1921 that I wish to chronicle. His opponent was Joe Kalbuk. In the first round Pat hit Joe so hard on the head that Kalbuk's pants split all the way down the back! The referee did not stop the fight and all those present saw a lot of blood until the bell ended the round. Only then was he allowed to don another pair of trunks. The bout lasted the scheduled 10 rounds, with Comiskey the winner on points.

The great American negro, Sam Langford fought Australian Colin Bell one day in temperature of about 120 degrees. At the end of the 15th round the referee declared a draw. Langford appealed to the official "Let us have a winner." Mr. Referee F. J. race Miller Bell over 75 yards and whatever wins the race wins the fight."

Bell, a fine athlete agreed. The two lined up, the referee dropped his cap and away they ran. Near the end Langford was ahead but Bell threw himself at the tape and the race ended in a dead heat. So the fight result stayed a draw. Later the two met again, with Langford winning by knockout.

Some 30 years ago two heavyweight by name Dilian and Dicksteader, met in America. In the second round Dilian landed a hard right on Dicksteader's jaw. Dicksteader immediately dropped his hands, passed on his heel and walked to his corner. He reached for the stool and sat down. The referee followed him to see what was wrong. Dicksteader just looked at the referee casually and said: "He's too good. I quit."

During an exhibition tour in 1924, Jack Dempsey stopped off at Alabama. Jack bowed over a couple of locals and quickly ran out of sparring partners. The exhibition was given in a theatre, with fans paying to watch, as Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, urgently sought additional sparring partners.

A big negro volunteered. "Done any boxing?" queried Kearns.

"Yessah, I boxed Sam Lang-



Big "Snowy" Baer referred the December, 1921, match between Tim Ladd and Johnnie Thompson. He became so enraged with Thompson's ability to avoid a punch that he landed the punch himself.

ford," replied the negro.

Quickly the negro was hustled into the ring. Gloves were tied on his hands and the bell sounded. Dempsey came out of his corner in his customary weave, flinched with a right and hooked with his left. The punch caught the negro on the jaw, dropping him to the canvas.

The referee, noting the negro was OK, said to him, "Get up, Sambo."

"Nooo," replied Sambo.

"Ain't you gonna fight any more?" queried the referee.

"Yusuh. Ah'm gonna fight some more—but not tonight." And he refused to get off the floor until Dempsey left the ring.

In February, 1927, a rough American lightweight named Johnny Reitler had his last fight in Australia. Johnny was beaten bare by Billy Grimes and American Joe Hall, disputing the decision, on each occasion. Then came his final Australian fight. The opposition was Australian Billy Richards. The venue was Sydney Stadium.

Referee Joe Willis warned Reitler repeatedly for breaches of the rules. Reitler was very annoyed at

the rebukes and by the last round the American was fit to be tied. Came the final bell and Willis rested his hand on Reitler's head, signifying the Australian as winner. Then, as was Big Joe's custom, he abruptly turned his back and walked to the ropes, preparing to leave the ring.

Reitler let out a roar, ran after Willis and hit him twice. Willis quickly turned and drove Reitler back across the ring with two heavy punches. Reitler quickly returned to action while police, seconds and spectators piled into the ring.

At least 20 men congregated at the scene of action on one side of the hampstead square. Then came the sound of cracking timber—and the ring tipped on one side, tumbling much of its human cargo into the aisle.

That unexpected event saved an ugly situation from developing into a full-scale riot. The crowd saw the funny side and burst into a load roar of laughter.

Needless to say, Reitler was put on the first available boat back to the States.

(Continued on page 57)

SUNLIT MAID



*In a sunny glade
By a rippling brook,
Stands a young maiden
With a warm sultry look
The sun on her tresses
Gives a silvery thread—
To the rich auburn brown
That caresses her head . . .*



MERCY



The O'Keefes were somewhat of a legend around Suva. And when Carmel O'Keefe

THE Fijian houseboy, Eli, opened the door to John Saul. Almost before Saul could extend a greeting Jean Sinclair came hurrying. "Darling, I'm so glad you're here." Saul was conscious of the warmth and suavity in her kiss.

"They? We only parted at lunch-time." He grunted at her.

"But darling, that's hours." She had a fiery, indignant manner—a girl who would grow old grandly and beautifully. John Saul was deeply in love with her.

"What's it going to be like if they post you to another flight?" he inquired.

She studied him thoughtfully. "Don't tease darling—I'm frighteningly jealous and possessive." In the plain white dress with its fur-trimmed skirt and bare shoulders,

and dark hair fluffed out a little, she had put gravity aside with her hostess uniform.

The front gate slammed loudly in the night. Quick footsteps echoed on the cement footpath, speeding up the steps to the veranda. A hard hand hammered on the front door.

"That's Tim O'Keefe," Jean said as Eli went to answer the summons.

"O'Keefe!" Saul looked down at her, frowning a little. "You didn't tell me . . . I thought this was to be an evening for your family and I to get acquainted."

She laughed. "Of course, darling. Now we are engaged they want to have a good look at you—to give them approval. But this is something serious that's come up. Didn't you hear the news—

about the Basita? Carmel O'Keefe is Tim's wife."

"Good grief, I'm sorry," Saul apologized. "I didn't connect the two." He turned toward the door as O'Keefe burst in.

"Hi, Eli. Mr. Sinclair?" O'Keefe queried. He was a man of medium height . . . like, rather . . . a sun-tanned, square-jawed face and grey, dancing eyes. A man in his early 30s, he was dressed in tan slacks, a forest shirt and leather thong on his feet.

"Hi, Tim." Jean greeted, "I want you to meet John Saul."

Saul was conscious of O'Keefe's grip. He was also conscious of the man. He'd heard a lot about O'Keefe. Only those big interests in aviation hadn't O'Keefe flew a freighter — New Zealand, Australia, Canada — anywhere in the

MISSION

FICTION • J. C. SHELLEY



was shipwrecked on Hallert's Reef, Tim O'Keefe knew just what to do . . .

Pacific where there was freight to be delivered or picked up. A lot of flying men spoke of O'Keefe with reverence. Saul was interested in a vague way. As a co-pilot flying the Pacific route to Vancouver he had some sort of status in the flying world too. And like so many more of his kind, he was inclined to look down his nose a bit at freight pilots.

"You did me," O'Keefe burped, looking at Jean and grasping Saul after the formality of the handshake.

"Yes."

They followed her across the lounge room and out to the screened veranda. A floor lamp threw a pool of soft light on polished boards and colored Persian scattermats. Ian Sinclair rose to greet them. He was a tall, heavily-boned

man with a quiet sensitive face. Saul liked him instantly.

"Mother's taken the car in town," Jean continued, "but she won't be long. Please sit down."

Ell arrived with a tray of glasses and a can of chilled beer. Saul was vaguely worried about the apparent tension in the room but the interlude seemed to soften the atmosphere.

A calm clear protestation as O'Keefe sat down. "Did you hear the news — the local stuff, I mean?" For all its quick abruptness, O'Keefe's voice was not harsh. Saul, realizing that O'Keefe was a friend of the family, relaxed.

"Yes," Ian Sinclair said simply. He looked thoughtfully at the glass in his hand, obviously not

intending to say anything further for the moment.

"You mean about the Baylys?" Jean asked softly. She had sat down on a cane stool, glass held in both hands, looking down at the floor.

"Carmel was on it," O'Keefe continued quietly, revolving his glass round and round so that the light sparkled and glinted out. "There was a note on the bed about it when I got home."

"Ruth and Carmel had charted the Baylys," Sinclair said. "There was the captain and two others for crew. She wanted to paint Hallert's Reef."

"That's right," O'Keefe agreed. "That's what she said in her note. And now the Baylys' a wreck — and there's no news of survivors."

"Drink up and have another."



"Yes, it is rather a worn night to be seeing a waitress but she's all right, I don't have anything on under it."

Sinclair said sleepily, "there's plenty more in the refrigerator."

"I feel like going down to the pub and getting roaring!" O'Reeke said angrily.

"If you want to do that I'll go with you," Sinclair offered.

"Only what damn use would that do?" O'Reeke added. It was obvious he was only talking.

Saul had heard the news about the Beguine, but the time had not given it his full attention. Now, suddenly, it was a clearer thing. He drank from his glass slowly, trundling back over airport and pub gossip — anything he'd heard concerning Carmel O'Reeke.

There was nothing dirty in any of it. Carmel wasn't the type. She was perhaps romantic and temperamental — being, a lot of people maintained, Saul did not believe that part. Carmel had a gift as a painter, and a damned fine one from what he'd seen of her work.

He hardly knew her personally, having seen her once or twice at

a distance when someone had pointed her out — a stout little woman with blonde hair worn in a pony tail. She was wholly unadulterated — liable to turn up at a cocktail party wearing skin-tight leopardskin pants and a yellow blouse that left nothing to the imagination . . . or go to church in an evening gown.

But wherever she went there was never a dull moment. Carmel O'Reeke believed you were a fool if you didn't get all the fun you could out of life.

Like her husband she was something of a legend around Sava. People always talked about the O'Reeke, because there was always something new happening to them. Rumor had it that when Tim arrived back at Nossi in his freighter, he'd hop in his Austin and head for Sava — but he'd never know, until he got home — whether he was welcome or not. Saul had heard they were genuinely attached to each other but thought like cat and dog.

O'Reeke swallowed his beer and

pushed his glass across the table to be refilled. "Thanks, I can do with another."

Saul got the impression the man was a contradiction. One minute he might be in the depths of depression — the next on the crest of the wave.

"You know," O'Reeke said abruptly, "we had a hell of a go in last time I was home." His face wore a smile for a instant. "It was breakfast time. I topped a plate of bacon and soft-boiled eggs on top of my skull. I was a hell of a mess. Luckily I'd just come from the shower and wasn't wearing a stitch of clothing."

Jean snorted a giggle. She had apparently heard of the episode through her mother. "How long were you home for, Tim?"

"Three days. Maybe I overstayed my welcome, but then other folks hang round their home year in year out. Strange, isn't it? He seemed genuinely perplexed.

"What did you say to Carmel to make her not like that?" Jean persisted.

"What did I say? Just the only sort of thing any man's likely to say to his wife first thing in the morning. I'd hopped out of the shower and was dashing about looking for some clean clothes. 'Put your clothes on — you're a big boy now!' I said. I cracked her under the chin and said, 'Well, Carm, old girl, you're starting to show your age. Why don't you wear your contacts more often?'

Jean got an attack of the giggles. Saul grinned, beginning to understand some of the rumors he'd heard. They were certainly a mad pair, the O'Reeke.

"All jokes aside — this is serious now," Sinclair broke in. "When I heard the news I rang Meadoway — he's in the Government shipping department. It seems that a Navy-painted plane spotted the wreck just after dark. They were able to get down low enough to read the name Beguine. She's beached on the northern tip of the reef — lying broken and half-submerged on her side. The plane crew see no survivors."

"Beguine Reef is 150 miles to the northeast," O'Reeke said. "It's three miles long — a series of lagoons and small reefs. One still, near the centre, is about an acre in area, with a few palms growing on it. What the hell did Carmel want to go there for? There's plenty of palms around here the old point."

He looked at them belligerently. "Did you know Carmel was going on this trip, Dan?" he shot at Sinclair.

Sinclair looked uncomfortable, plainly regretting the fact that his wife was not there for moral support. He sought to evade the question by calling for another can of beer.

"Did you know?" O'Reeke persisted.

"With did say something about it at the time. But I don't think I took much notice. You know what Carmel's like. She's always full of wacky ideas."

"And home?" O'Keefe said shortly. "The DOB at home said she was going for four or five weeks—and that they were eggs and bacon in the bridge. I'm not certain what she means by the latter."

"Serious as the news is, there could be survivors," Sinclair said quietly. "The Government's sending a boat in the morning. If you like I'll try to get you a passage on it."

"Joe damn slow, Ian," O'Keefe protested. The chair crashed at his impatient movements. "They won't get there until tomorrow night. There'll be no news until the next day. Damn it! I'll be in Tonga by then."

Sinclair shrugged his shoulders. "It's about the best that can be done. I know how you feel about it, old chap—but what else can we do?"

"I'll hop out and have a look myself in the morning," O'Keefe said quietly.

"What?" Sinclair started, staring at his friend.

"I'll go in the Austin," O'Keefe said, withdrawing into silence. "Three hundred miles, there and back. That gives me 20 minutes for a look around and 15 minutes of reserve fuel when I get back. Plenty. I'll get away at dawn. Be back by night—there'll give me time for a shave, a bath to eat and get up to Nandi for a noon take-off in the freighter."

"You're mad, Tim!" Sinclair exclaimed. "That's about 300 miles over the sea in a single-engined plane. What about headwinds—things like that?"

"Won't be anything above a 30-knot breeze in the morning," O'Keefe stated.

Silence settled on the room. No



"And avoid excitement of any kind . . . AVOID EXCITEMENT OF ANY KING . . . AVOID EXCITEMENT . . ."

one questioned O'Keefe on his weather forecasts. Over the years he had become an expert on Pacific weather.

Saul, watching O'Keefe, felt a vast respect for the man. He had flown the freighter up from Auckland that day and was due out of

Nandi at noon the next . . . but at dawn he was proposing a 300-mile jump to Nandi's Road in an Austin. Saul just had to justify to the man mad. But O'Keefe wasn't mad. He was going out on a crazy mission—no man could do less. Saul thought of stopping . . . but there didn't seem to be anything he could do.

"But the authorities won't let you fly," Sinclair said hurriedly, trying desperately to deter O'Keefe. He was appalled at the thought of all those miles across the sea in a single-engined plane.

"They won't know I'm gone until you fly," O'Keefe grumbled. He looked happier now—contented in mind and body. He had made his decision . . . that was all there was to it. "I wonder who I can get to go with me?" He looked at Saul.

Saul realised they were all looking at him, and he groaned foolishly. He was due out of Nandi himself the following evening. He knew how it would be with the skipper if the co-pilot was sleepy on the long haul to Vancouver. Also, he had no desire to go with O'Keefe in the morning—not under such impossible conditions. The man was asking for trouble.

Saul's trained, calculating mind reviewed the proposed flight objectively. He recalled inwardly at the thought of it. In the first place there would be no permission given.

(Continued on page 47)

"Look, Buddy, when I want your opinion I'll ask for it . . . Now then, what's your opinion?"

ADAM, October, 1963 15



It was a gasser, but nothing to laugh at . . .

CAP THE KILLER—



OR DIE!

I WALKED into the bankhouse, stiff and sore after a day of unloading and stacking pipe, thinking it would feel good to take it easy on the bank awhile after I cleaned up.

I had a month on the oil fields behind me and my muscles had had time to tighten up. Tired as I was, I felt good, and I enjoyed knowing the day's work was over, and that I'd done my share.

I thought I might take off into town that evening and spend a little of that first month's pay, before it turned a bolt to my pocket.

I dropped my gloves and jacket on the iron frame of my cot and started toward the washroom.

"Get your stuff off my bank, bud," Charley Ryan's voice sounded behind me.

"What do you mean, your bank?"

I turned around in time to see Ryan's big paws knock my jacket and gloves off the bank onto the floor. I realized he had moved all my stuff and equipment from the space he had occupied to the place he had used, and he had moved his own stuff in to take its place. Ryan followed my glance and laughed.

"I moved your stuff. I decided I want to sleep here."

"I've been here a month. You can't just move me out of my bank."

"Who says I can't? I'm an old hand here, sonny. You just been here a month. You got no rights here. This bank's too nice for somebody as green as you are."

Ryan weighed 200 or so pounds more than I did and stood several inches taller. He had given me a hard time from my first day in the bankhouse.

"Get your big tail off my bank, Ryan."

"What are you going to do about it?"

Ryan started to laugh. I swung and caught him off balance and he went down. As he was getting up, I swung again and he went down again. Ryan began to swear.

"Why you little son of a bitch," he yelled. "I'm going to kill you, so help me."

I was so mad I couldn't see straight. But I knew where Ryan was. I dove across the floor and landed on his shoulders and began to beat his big head against the iron frame of one of the banks. Ryan tried to shake me off and I let him have it so hard so I could. His hands strapped against the bank frame again and he went out like a light.

Jim Kilpatrick, the foreman, came into the bankhouse then.

An oilfield man's life is tough and tiring. And when a gasser blows, someone's got to cap it . . .

"What the hell do you think you're up to?" he roared.

"Nothing. It's a personal matter," I said. The blood was pounding in my ears so I could hardly hear him.

"Well this is no time for personal matters," Kilpatrick roared again, even louder this time. "I don't know how you got him cold, but wake him up again. We're all going back on duty. A wild one blew in on Number 17. We've got to cap it tonight or the whole damn field could go up."

"You mean we're going to cap a gasser?"

Kilpatrick looked at me as though I was some kind of animal he'd never seen before and didn't like the look of.

"Well, you'll learn. There's nobody else around to do it. I'll get the rest of the crew and meet you over by the cap — you and Ryan, when you wake him up."

The town was Berger, Texas, and I came into it in the late spring of 1932 looking for a short-term job as an oil roughneck.

Berger was a boom town, as new as the oil field itself.

But already it was a lot bigger than towns like Centreville, with a hundred years of tradition and older ways behind them. Maybe half the town population was made up of men who actually worked in the field—the rest of Berger consisted of the thousand-square-varieties of gamblers, high-money artist, gamblers, easy-money woman, each of whom could take a month's or a half-year's salary from a husky, not-too-bright oil worker in less time than it took to shake his hand.

There wasn't an awful lot of law in Berger. The Texas Rangers took care of major offenders—murders, big-jackers, and the like. They didn't have any real jail in town, and you could walk through the streets and see the prisoners out in the open on what they called "the trailin'," staked out on a long heavy iron chain with shorter lengths and heavy metal ankles spanned at intervals on it.

If a man got killed in a fair fight, the law didn't pay too much attention to it, unless you could prove that the fight was really a setup from the start. Texas law hasn't changed too much in that respect to this day.

I probably didn't look too good to the field superintendent when I presented myself and told him the front office had signed me on.

I was still in my teens, skinny at 140 pounds, and I spent my winters going to school out of the State. My newly pressed khakis

had never had a spot on them, the white canvas gloves that stuck out of my hip pocket were brand new and obviously had never been used. When I stuck out my hand to shake his, there wasn't a callous to be seen. I was green as grass and, thinking back on it now, I guess I must have had something like nervousness written all over my face.

The foreman for the roundabout crew was Jim Kilpatrick. His face told when he took a look at me the next morning, but he never said a word about it.

Kilpatrick was a first-rate field foreman. Whenever a job came up he pitched in right along with us. If I didn't know which end was up on a job, Jim wouldn't knock me if I started out on it wrong.

He'd pick up the work, whether it was, and get started on it without benefit of my tip. All the time, he'd be talking about what he'd done the night before or what was happening somewhere else on the field — anything except the job he was showing me how to do.

After a couple of weeks of this, I would have picked up the idea of the job without any difficulties, and could take it over from him without either one of us having said, or even acknowledged, the embarrassing fact that, up until that moment, I hadn't known the first thing about what I was doing.

I learned to admire Jim Kilpatrick, and after I'd been on the job long enough to know the ropes, I recognized that his crew was the only one on the field that consistently got its work done on time.

It was the kind of work that pounds you into sleep quickly. Chopping up around active or inactive wells, laying and connecting the pipe, dipping staves for the oil, gas, or water lines, greasing or oiling the pipe, unloading it or stacking it — I got to feel at home around the fields, and I got to like my job pretty well, maybe because it was so different from the kind of thing I had done over the last couple of years.

I guess when Charley Ryan saw me the first time he decided he was looking at something he didn't like.

Maybe it was just the difference that showed that I was just going to be in Berger's oil fields for that summer, and Charley had already been there a couple of years, and likely as not wasn't going anywhere else.

The first time I tried to talk to him he put it to me levelly.



"I know you can't wait to get me to the hotel room and see how I look without my glasses."

"Kid, you keep out of my way and I'll keep out of yours. I don't like you and I don't mind telling you to your face. The sooner you get out of here, the happier I'll be."

The trouble was, Ryan wasn't as good as he worded. He was a lover, and he got into a kind of mixed somewhere when nothing went right for him. When that happened, he liked to ride me, and after a couple of weeks of getting pushed out of the way in the show line, or taking whackscreases that I didn't like the idea of taking, I got pretty short-tempered myself.

But Charley Ryan had his own kind of brains, and he worked well on the roundabout crew, and the other men looked up to him in some ways.

It was the first time I ever got into a set-up where I felt like an eight ball, and I didn't know just what to do about it. I had always got along pretty well wherever I went before. Now I was tied up and on edge, and when I came in that afternoon and Charley Ryan tried to pull that stunt with my equipment and my bush, I exploded.

I didn't cherish any thoughts about being able to handle myself in any kind of mishap with Ryan, who was not only larger than I, but tough and experienced. I just got to the point where I couldn't take any more without putting my back up.

But all that seemed years and miles behind me as Ryan and myself and half a dozen other men rode in the old flat-touring car Jim Kilpatrick used as transportation, racing toward the gasser that had blown in so violently and suddenly that the whistling roar of the rushing gas could be heard for

miles.

That gasser had to be capped, and we were the men who were going to do it. You'd think it would be a job for experts, but they didn't have so many experts in those days — just as they didn't have any of the safety equipment they use today for the same job. Actually no well is "safe", but a new well is especially dangerous, until you get a hold on it which will control and contain the gasses that otherwise fan out through the whole surrounding area, where any chance spark can touch it off.

When a well blows in, as this one had, you start out with a fully dangerous situation already created. You then have to park the head on the rig with the chance that if any slightest thing goes wrong, you're finished.

As we came into the immediate area of the gasser, the strong rotten-egg sulphurous smell piled into our noses like pea-soup. If it didn't choke you to death, it would probably wind up drowning you. You get used to that bad smell if you work around the oil fields, but this was the strongest and most令人窒息的 contamination I had ever hit. None of the others on the roundabout crew liked it either.

"This is the most awful thing I ever smelled. Let's get it over with," Tedder said. He was new in the fields that summer like myself.

Ryan just grunted. "If the smell's the worst we get out of this, it'll be enough for me."

Actually the closer we got to the blown-in well, the less terrible the smell gave us. There was a stiff breeze helping, but most of all it was the force of the wild jet of gas itself — it blew itself so far out that the couple of yards close up to the rig was comparatively contamination free.

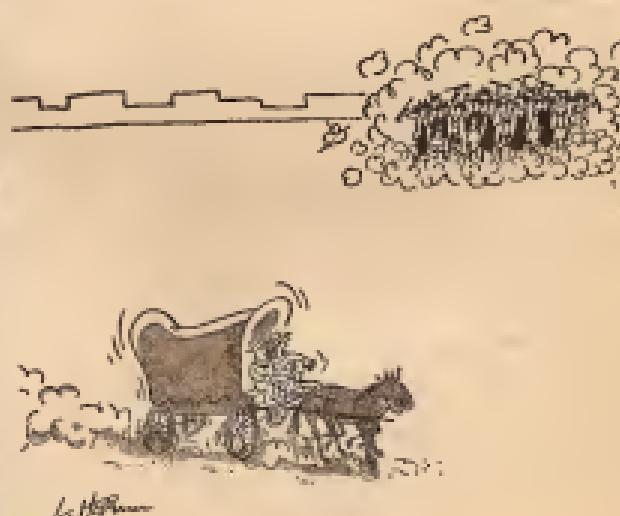
"OK. Let's go in and take a look at it," Kilpatrick said.

"Nothing much to look at," Ryan commented sourly. "It's what you don't see that'll kill ya."

I was feeling just scared enough to get sick.

"Look, Ryan, shut up," I snapped at him.

"What's the matter? Ain't you ever done this before?" Ryan said. "You getting scared?"



"Quick, make a circle!"

"Here, I'm getting scared. Why not?" I started, but Kilpatrick interrupted me.

"You ever done this before, Ryan?" he asked in his quiet way.

"For the first time I saw Ryan back off."

"I see other guys do it," he said. Lots of times.

"I thought you were taking a good job," Kilpatrick said. "Well see how you look about it when we're all over."

That was all that was said about it then, but I was pretty sure Ryan wouldn't forget about it.

There was an earthen ramp leading to the collar, the pit beneath the rig floor. We walked up to it and peered into the shadowy confusion of the pit. You couldn't have seen your hand in front of your face in there, the gas was as dense and smoky. It looked like a London fog, and it stank in there stronger than anything we'd left yet. This was all gas that accumulated from the wild jet, but had failed to pass through the hole cut in the rig floor.

"We can't go in there," Fodder said. "We can't breathe in there."

"We're not coming out of there till we get the control-head on that well," Kilpatrick said. "As long as that jet stays wild, this whole field can go up at any moment."

I took a look at the control head. It was simply a heavy cut-off valve that we had to screw on to the protruding head of the casing. It sounded easy, but it wasn't. The way we would work, it was darn near impossible.

Kilpatrick's instructions were direct and to the point.

"Anybody who starts to breathe in that collar might as well forget about coming out again. Fill your lungs with as much air as you can hold," Kilpatrick said.

"Well, start at the top of the ramp. Hold your breath, carry the control-head down as quickly as you can. Try to get it on and at least start the threads. Then come out and grab a fresh breath and go back in to finish it. I'll give you all your signals by hand. If you feel any dizziness or blackouts, get out fast on your own hook and explain it later on."

He looked around at us and each man nodded that he understood what he had to do.

"All right, the sooner we start at the sooner it's over. One try'd do it if we hit it on the head."

I took a hand with the control head and we filed into the collar, underneath the rig.

Holding my breath, I looked around wildly for the casing, found it just where it was supposed to be, and then almost surprised me. It looked like it was going to be easy. As it turned out, it wasn't easy at all. The control head lifted up and fitted over the casing snugly enough, but when we turned it to start the threads, they failed to start.

By this time my lungs had started to burn, and the rest of us felt the same way. We made three separate tries at getting the



"My wife is out on the road making personal appearances . . . this is her understudy."

control head on the casing and gripping it, but it wouldn't start. The threads were just stubborn.

Kilpatrick glanced at the ramp. We all sat down the control head fast and got out of the collar even faster. The open air, even feel as a man with loose gas from the general area, hit my face like a tidal wave off a mountain lake. We caught a breath and then went back in again. The third time we tried it I caught an album in my ribs as we came out and exhaled too soon. I looked up at Ryan's grimacing face.

"You could have killed me," I yelled, but he just grunted.

We tried a fourth time and still didn't make it, and this time one of the crew took off when we got back out into the open air. We caught up with him a couple of hundred paces away, he was babbling incoherently. He had grabbed a thick mixture of the gas into his lungs. We held on to him for a while and he eventually calmed down and came back with us.

By now we had had it pretty thoroughly. None of us wanted to

go back into that collar and try to get that head on another time, at least, not the way we had been trying it so far.

"We've already run our chances out too far on a string," Kilpatrick said.

"What do you mean? Long as we hold our breath, we're all right in there, aren't we?" I asked him.

"It isn't the gas I'm worried about — it looks, not start it getting into our lungs," Kilpatrick answered. "Did you get a clear up view of that threading on the casing and the head?" Do you know what would happen if a spark jumped from the grating of one thread on the other? We'd go up in cinders."

"But we tied the threads before we tried to put the head on," I objected.

"There's always the possibility it hasn't got to some portion or another of the threads, either on the casing or the head," Kilpatrick said. "And we've already tried that damn thing on a half dozen times."

(Continued on page 58)

He went through the fear-stiffened motions, his fright obvious. Once he had been the country's greatest matador... now he was a has-been, scared to death by a four-legged animal.

THIS Wolf lay on the bed, staring aimlessly at the curtains rustling gently in the mid-morning breeze.

He heard her footsteps coming up the stairs and stopping at the door but he did not get up. He heard her fumbling at the door while she put down the tray to turn the handle. She opened the door and came in.

She put the tray alongside him and sat on the edge of the bed. He reached for the food, ignoring her.

He reached out with a hand roughened a little with work and stroked his naked chest. "You didn't come to me last night."

He studied the tortillas into his mouth and grunted. "Too tired. A man gets tired, you know."

She stroked his chest more eagerly. "Tired? What do you do to get tired?"

He reached for the coffee and swilled it down. He stared at her, his eyes cold and distant as a colorless.

"Maybe I'm just getting tired of the company."

Her hands became two frantic claws pulling him toward her. "Don't say that—don't say that. You wouldn't leave me ever, would you, Luisito?" Her eyes were suddenly two great black pools of apprehension.

He pushed her hands away. "Don't let's talk of marriage. A man gets tired and he moves on. That's all." He reached for more tortillas.

She got up and moved away from the bed. He watched the movement of her hips as she walked across the room. No doubt about it, she had meat on her and it was pretty well distributed. But a man gets tired, that was all.

She turned quickly back to him, her long black hair swinging about her shoulders, the wrinkles suddenly a little more obvious about her eyes. He thought, she's getting older. He could see she knew what he was thinking.

She burst out, "Listen, I've been thinking of selling this place and buying a ranch. A small one. We could raise cattle. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

He finished the coffee and lay back. "Ranch root-cows? How exciting."

She came back towards him, her hands reaching out, hungry for

RETURN TO GLORY

FICTION • DAMON HILLS

him, but stopping suddenly because she could see he did not want it.

"Luisito, my darling, don't you want that? Wouldn't you like—"

He snarled at her, "What are you talking about, woman? Breed bulls, yes. They're noble, fine, brave. Lions with hooves. But cows—"

He turned away from her angrily. After a moment he heard her gathering up the things. He heard her go to the door and he knew without looking that her cheeks were streaked with tears, but he did not turn his head. The door opened and she left.

After a while the door opened again. He turned his head again. It was the boy, tiny and tattered.

He snapped, "What do you want?"

The boy came closer, the big eyes worshipping him. "Tell me again how it was when you fought again in Seville and Mexico City, El Loco."

The boy had her eyes, black and lustreous. He sat up and ruffed the boy's hair. He said, "Well, it was like this, much so—"

He began to talk, his eyes glazing as he began to re-create the days of glory...

Down below she moved across the room to pick up the bowl emptied by the priest. The priest stared at her, "Daughter, have you rid yourself of that evil man yet?"

She shook her head.

The priest persisted, "Not that such an alliance would be of any value, but has he offered to marry you?"

Again she shook her head. The priest, angular and stern, got up.

"Daughter, rid yourself of this man. He will bring great evil upon you and the boy."

She kept her head down. She

moved back across the room, the bowl and the empty success in her hand.

A short fat man at one of the tables reached out and took her arm, his pudgy fingers lingering on her thin flesh.

"Marie—just one second—"

She sat down, her head drooping. He stared at her eagerly, "Marie, have you and he—he laying?"

She raised her head, staring right through him. She said emptily, "I told him I'd buy a ranch. Just a small one. He could raise cattle. But he said no—he said no—." She stopped, her mouth quivering.

The little fat man, face red-denting, blurted, "That—that bum—that animal—bring off a woman—"

She shot him a fierce look. "Don't say that, Don Felipe. He was a great fighter."

The fat man grunted, "That's right—was. You know, for a moment I had thoughts of getting him to appear at my corral. But how foolish to think that be—"

The woman stared. "Your corral?"

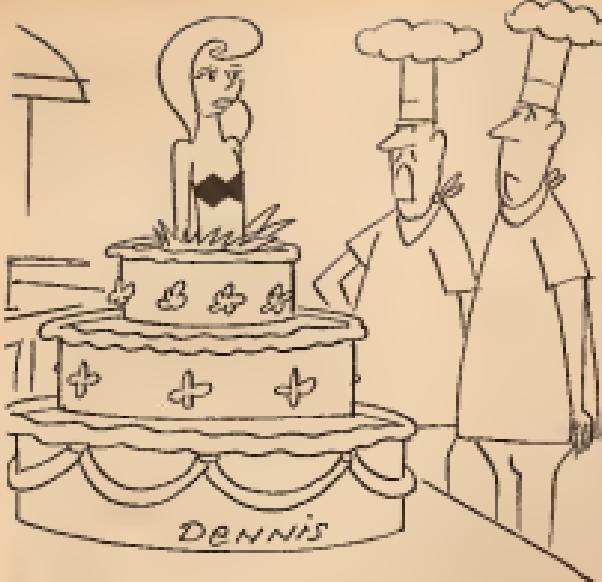
The little fat man nodded self-importantly. "Yes. The mayor of a town should put on these shows now and again. I intended to let people see I am not the passive-punching type the last fellow was. I intend—"

She said sharply, "Don't ask him. If he gets back there again I'll lose him forever. Can't you see that?"

He stared back at her and suddenly shrugged his fat little shoulders fatalistically. "He said softly, "You really love that bum, don't you?"

She turned her head away and got up. He said almost timidly, "Marie, my dear, I could educate the boy, give him everything he needs. And I would treat you





"She needs more yeast."

like an infant. You have only to say the word."

The leaned down and impulsively pressed his arm. "You're a good man, but—"

He grinned wryly. "One word. And I can wait a long time."

The went through into the kitchen. The little fat man rose from the table, sighed, and walked away.

The Wolf twisted his mouth in the grin that helped get him his name. "I'll let it wasn't yours, man." His mouth twisted a little more as he softly used the short term his brother. He leaned back. "You look prosperous, Poco. Got a new rancho, a crazy kid, parking a lot of money for you?"

The girl said, "He's got no one like El Lobo."

The girl came in the door. The man grinning there, graced peasants and a couple of feathered-faced ranchers, looked across at her and gaped.

She was swathed in furs, her silken long sleek and like her dark red hair curved about her head like a glittering terms helmet. She walked across the room to The Wolf, her every movement showing she was a dancer.

A man came in behind her, lean, tight-lipped, hard-eyed, the gold chain of his wrist matching the one clapped about his tie. The hard-eyed man looked down at The Wolf and flicked his eyes slightly for a moment. He said abruptly, "It was her idea — this coming here to see you."

The Wolf looked up at her. "Ah — the goddess of loyalty, the sweater of ills of visiting half-folks."

She said, "That wasn't called for, Lutuca."

The Wolf grimed coldly. "And your running off to Mexico City with this maniac while I lay there ripped to pieces from the horns of that black monster in Sevilla — that was called for, my angel of fidelity!"

The hard-eyed man said sharply, "I don't like that word you called me."

"Mano, you should have been around in hear some of the things I called you back in Sevilla."

The girl said quickly, "I had an engagement in Mexico City. A big one. I would have lost a lot of money if I hadn't gone. And when I got back you'd left the hospital and nobody knew where you'd gone."

The hard-eyed man snarled. "You can run away. You never even went down to the empty plaza and tried moving around with a cape and a pal acting the bull for you."

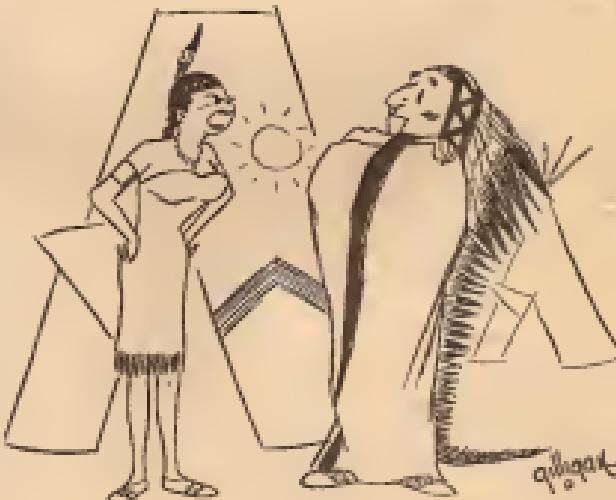
The Wolf narrowed his eyes and the other man involuntarily moved back. "Stay there, manager. I'm not going to hit you. Managers aren't worth it. We bleed, they take the money. And go to Mexico City with a bum like this."

The girl blushed. "You're taking some nice names around."

The Wolf and softly, "You're lucky I'm not tearing you around."

The hard-eyed man said impatiently, "I told you how it would be. Let's get out of here."

The girl said urgently, "Lutuca, you could get back up there again. You're still young. I want to help you do that."



"Don't lie to me, that's not our point . . . that's hypocrit!"

The Wolf grinned harder. "I'm doing all right. A woman keeps the here. Gives me all I want. You want me to come back with — get in the shape again, and reverse all that."

The girl stopped back. "We're staying overnight. We'll see you again tomorrow."

"Not if you come before noon. I don't get up till then. She brings my meals up to me." He sneered at the girl. "I learned all your tricks. Only I practice them on women."

The girl turned and went out the door, the hard eyes raven following her and probing about staying the night in the town. The eyes of the men in the room followed the girl.

The Wolf stared after her, face twisted cruelly, but deep in his eyes there was a flicker of rising passion. She had always been fire in his blood. He called loudly for another brandy . . .

She said bluntly, "Yes, senor, that is what I said — make El Lobo your first sword—your number one fighter."

The little fat man shuddered, "But, senorita, he is no longer The Wolf. He is just a broken-down horse living off a woman."

The girl snapped, "Who you think you are? What do you figure this is — the Plaza Monumental del Madrid? He's the greatest name any of these googly-eyed peasants will ever see in their lives."

"Yes, yes, but — but, senorita, they all know him for a dragon hawk. They will not believe that he could recuperate the glory of the past."

She moved across the room, a she-pantier of grace and blood-quenching allure. She sat on the desk, the tight frock riding up above her silken knickers. He stared, eyes popping, sweating.

She leaned across and ran her fingers up the back of his neck, her face close against his. He tingled at the close-up closeness. She crooned, "Now, senor, it's settled, isn't it? It will be your senior mistress for this show of yours?" And, who knows — you and I perhaps later?"

He stared up at her eyes bulging, overwhelmed. He nodded silently. She slid off the desk and picked up her fur. At the door she turned and threw him a kiss. As she went out she wriggled her hips. The little fat man gasped and giggled.

The Wolf got up and went to the door. She was strolling there, her magnificent brown body sheathed in a skin-tight white frock with a necklace that left no doubt she was a woman.

He stared at her, his eyes narrowing. "What do you?"

"I've stayed over for another day. Foco left early this morning. I thought you might like to come for a drive. I've hired a car."

He stared silently. She put a slim brown hand on his arm.



"Oh, thank you . . . my son will be skinned . . . he matches you exactly all the time!"

"Please. I've got sandwiches and wine."

He said sharply, "Wait — I'll get dressed!" As he pulled his clothes on he realized with a quick flare of anger that he was getting as excited about it as a schoolboy. He pushed the feelings down and went out to her. He walked silently down the stairs with her and out to the car.

Behind them the other woman watched, her eyes like open wounds . . .

They had left, the orange groves behind and were slowly picking their way over the rutted white road. The girl drove with ease and skill.

The Wolf suddenly snapped his head to one side. Over to the right the sierras spread out, a great spreading panorama of palms and acacias with the glittering water of sparkling pools flashing in between. Moving across open spaces between the trees and water could be seen the huge black hump-backed dons.

He said fiercely, "Why did you

bring me past the carbijo?"

She kept her eyes on the rutted road. "Just for you to look at them again. They were great opponents, Luisito. But you were greater than they. And you could be again."

He kept looking silent. Suddenly he said, "Stop the car."

She pulled up. Without a word he got out and walked across to the rolling marranos, the wooded hills. He stepped up on to a small rise and watched. A huge black monster moved slowly from among a group of acacias, his hide like a great ebony mirror in the sunlight. The Wolf watched silently.

The girl was at his shoulder. She said softly, "The bulls of the little old mayor will not be like that. You will kill them, those aceromas, in a flash, like lightning striking. And you will find that you will again be a great torero valiente."

He said suddenly, "We'll eat here." With a little smile she



"What gets me . . . his explanations are so danged logical!"

turned back towards the car to get the sandwiches and wine . . .

They lay back, the grass whispering above them. She turned her head to him, running the tips of her fingers gently down his cheek. She whispered, "Luisito . . ."

He turned towards her, his eyes suddenly staring. Her face broke into a happy smile and her fingers moved quickly to the fastenings of her dress . . .

Later in the car she curled up beside him as he got behind the wheel. She leaned across suddenly and kissed him tenderly behind the ear. She whispered, "It's only ever been you. Those others — they meant money, success, rags up the ladder, money in the bank, tons on my shoulders. But it's only ever been you."

He looked back at her silently. He leaned toward her and kissed her. She broke away, panting, desire flaring up again in her eyes.

"Luisito, let's—"

He shook his head. "No, no. If I'm going to fight I'll have to get in shape. Even for the scarecrow of the little mayor. And I start right now."

She curled up against him again as he started up the motor. She pinched at his ear, whispering, "You're cruel, my darling. But we'll make up for it later. How we'll make up for it . . ."

The woman said softly, "So you're going back with her."

The Wolf said sharply, "I haven't fought Don Felipe's bulls yet. If I'm a dog, that's it. No more trees at comebacks. No more barking around at the country west, fighting to get back."

The woman shook her head. "You will destroy those agreements of Don Felipe's like lightning striking."

He shot a quick glance at her. "That's what she said. It's good."

can't both be right. And it seems that I will be the wrong one."

She turned her back completely upon him. She said softly, "I loved you like I never loved my husband. He was a good man, a fine father to the boy, until the accident came and he died. But you . . . you made me know what love is. It's sweet as paradise — and bitter as hell. You made me want to both kiss and kill you. But without you I'll wither up and there'll be nothing left. The boy, too, will weep."

She turned to face him, her eyes too stricken for tears. "But it's in the stars. She is a goddess and you will soon again be a god. Mars and Venus. You will go a long, long way together. Que haya suerte — let there be luck, my darling."

After she had gone he went over to the window and looked out. Soon he would be striking down those screwy rents of the little mayor.

The face of the woman flashed across his mind with the pain in her eyes. He thought savagely, "It would only be just if one of those bitches got the horn into me good. But then he shuddered a little and moved back from the window. He lay down on the bed until it was time to start dressing . . ."

He looked around at the shoulder. There were no pleasure. No happiness to lean down

to know people have faith in me."

She got up and moved across the room, half-turned from him. She said, "Your women will always have faith in you. She has faith that you will again become a great torero valiente. I had faith that you could become a good breeder of cattle. But we



"Now, stop worrying about my dressed hamlets, George. Good night, dear, and sleep well."

and sink the long lance in and weaken the bull with the loss of blood.

There was no barrier, no barricade to stop behind when the bull was really raging and escape was momentarily necessary.

Nothing. Just the huge expanse of red-hot sand and a monster seeking to kill you. Only he felt thankful that it wouldn't be a spectator.

As some matador he would take the first bull. He turned his back on the opening of the tent, like he used to do a long time ago when, an invincible destroyer of bulls, he had disdainfully looked away from the monsters as they had charged forth.

The crowd was strangely silent. He turned slowly to look and something froze inside him.

It was a colossus — a huge, a red-blazed giant with a white belly. It thundered across the sand, a great roared nightmare with horns like raking leaves.

The master had dug up this demon from heaven knows where to make his show look good. And to make The Wolf look bad. As in death.

The Wolf thought, that little man really wants Maria. And then, sweating, he was thinking — how am I going to bring this animal down without a good part?

He nodded jerkily at one of the peasants, a bony young gypsy, to run the matador. The boy hesitated and then strolled out.

The Wolf watched closely and the sick feeling became a sudden violent retraction of the stomach. The beast slashed at the boy with one horn and then quick as lightning with the other.

The gypsy came scrambling back, white-faced. "I don't go out again, matador. That cathedral has fought more often than you."

The Wolf, swallowing hard, took the wetted cape and went out.

He knew from the start it was all wrong. His feet were as if he was moving in quicksand and he was a yard away from the charging demon. He did a couple of somersaults that he knew were sloppy and graceless, and once when he lunged and the bull scraped past he jumped back as if he had been scalded. When his miserable few passes were over he was panting and shaking as he walked away. The bull stood glowering, fresh and strong and deadly.

The sword handler was a withered old drunk the master had also dug up from somewhere. He stood at The Wolf and spat. "You've got a handful here, matador. But don't shake so much. They can smell fear."

The Wolf snarled the water around his mouth. "What in hell do you know about it?"

The old fellow shrugged. "I once played for Belmonts."

The Wolf, still shaking, shot a quick look at him. "Forgive me,



"Hey sir, 'Money isn't everything' is here."

mane. I'm edgy."

The old man said dryly, "You're more than edgy, matador. And that's a demon you've got hold of. But take it easy. Few moves wounds."

The Wolf relaxed a little. He was glad the old guy was there. The little fat master hadn't planned that but so well.

The other matador, a kid in a faded and bloodstained suit he'd bought cheap off some fallen star, went out to do the imitation quite in practice of jolting the bull away from a non-existent gored horse.

It happened like crimson lightning. The old took the bull past but the demon suddenly spun and hooked, wise in the ways of the cape. The boy was killed on the horns. The bull kept slanting, snorting, eyes rolling, blood dripping from his nose.

The Wolf, shaking, went out, flapping the cape. He knew the boy was dead before he hit the sand. He made a couple of passes

on fear-stricken legs and then scrambled back to the fence. He watched there carrying the dead boy off, trembling.

The sword handler was going to say something but took a look at him and stopped. This was something only the matador himself could straighten out. Only it looked like the bull was going to do it for him.

He had placed the banderillas. God alone knew how, and now he was going out for the last set, the heart-shaped needles in one hand.

He had seen her up there, her hair a coiled flame about her head, her sleek body a thing of desire even from that distance — but he did not look up. The fear and the dread of what was to come was too great.

He went through the fear-stricken motions, his right oblique, if tragedy had not already struck even this country audience would have been hooting him.

(Continued on page 32)

TWO BIT HERO

"Guns and shells cost money," was Cherokee's plaint . . . till he learned that the lack of them might cost his own life.

TURE sheriff said, "Won't cost you a dime, Cherokee, an' it'll earn be a big help to me."

One of the possemen gramed: "Wear his wagon goes down more," he said.

Cherokee Durhams was used to this. He put the point of his long shotgun against a wagon box and leaned out to look at the girl. She was a spare thing, he thought, with a peaked, aged face and a cloudy look in her blue eyes, standing there beside the big shield, almost covering.

Cherokee Durhams, the medicine man, wasn't stingy. It was just that he knew the value of dollars, having been without them the greater part of his life. The dark eyes lit up from the girl to the sheriff. "How 'bout the bridge toll?" he asked in a flat, droning voice. "It's two bits a head for passengers, besides a dollar for my rig."

The sheriff laughed and tossed a silver dollar to the gaunt man who sat on the seat of the crowded wagon. A hand-painted sign on the weathered canvas said Cherokee's Care-All. In smaller letters underneath the same on certain hand notched the world that Cherokee's Care-All was good for rheuma, colds, aches and pains of all kinds and every affliction on earth.

Cherokee caught the dollar and slowly took out a long leather purse and unstrapped the top and deliberately dropped the coin in the raggedous depths. He rolled the purse and carefully returned it to his inside coat pocket. He said, gruffly, "Get up here, woman. Ain't got no time to waste."

The sheriff helped the woman up over the front wheel. She sat on the seat as far away from Cherokee as she could get, holding firmly in the center. Cherokee hardly glanced at her as he lifted his lines.

The sheriff put his hand on Cherokee's knee. "Leave her off with any old woman," he said, low-voiced. "We'll have her man come daylight."

Cherokee looked at the girl. She gave no indication she heard the sheriff. He grunted and tucked his lines and started to his team. They moved out of the shade of the buildings into the blinding yellow heat of a morning sun.

The wagon road ran straight across the sagebrush flats and disappeared into the purple of the foothills. It took Cherokee a half a day to make it to Starve-a-cow Ford, and during that time the girl hadn't spoken a single word. Cherokee didn't mind. He wasn't a talkative man either, except when he put up his medicine for sale.

Cherokee pulled the team off the road and into the dusty willows that lined the creek. He took out the horses and led them down to water and afterward poured a small measure of grain into each bag.

"You kin go to the creek and fresh up whilst I make some coffee," he told the woman. He helped her down over the wheel, holding the bony hardness of her hands and feeling disturbed about it. He watched her pack her way around through the willows and down to the creek, trying to rid himself of the prying healing that grew on him.

He built a small fire and when she returned he had the cold lunch he'd fixed that morning ready, together with the coffee.

"Ain't much," he said, "but it'll do."

She said, low-voiced, "I'm not hungry."

He hand stopped with the tin cup halfway to his lips. He felt the bite of irritation in him. "Gotta keep up your strength," he said grumpily. He blew nobly into the coffee cup and then sipped his coffee.

"Why?" she cried suddenly. "Why should I?"

He jolted into the tin cup, slightly rusty around the handle. "Hurng it on yourself," he said laconically.

"That's what they all say," she said, her blue eyes dry and bright. "But it's not true. I haven't seen Jed for four years until yesterday."

"You got a bill of divorce?" Cherokee wanted to know.

She shook her head a hopelessness settling on her. "I never had the money. I left him when we was married three months. I know what he was. I came to Caliente and got a job with Morse."

"The freighter," Cherokee said.

She nodded. "I did right well, too. He promoted me from book-

keeper to cashier. Then yesterday Jed and these two other men walked in. They hollered for Morse and took all the money. The two men with Jed were killed. One of them didn't die right away and he skinned Jed."

"Why'd you try to run away?" Cherokee's coffee was cold. He drank it anyway, being a man who didn't waste anything.

"What would you have done?" she asked. "I looked bad for me. I was scared stiff. I didn't know what to do. So I ran away. You don't believe me, do you?"

"For certain," Cherokee said. "I believe you." He did too. There was something about the woman that conveyed honesty and character.

"But the others," she said. "They won't."

"Enter try'n' out," Cherokee advised.

"I can't," she said. Her eyes were no longer dry and bright. She put her face in her hands.

Cherokee carefully wrapped the remaining food and stowed it care fully in his wagon. He put the team in again. He helped the woman up to the seat. He said, "See that bisquet out'n the back. Make the seat a little softer." He had his foot on the hub when the rider came out of the willows.

The man's face, deformed by sun and wind, was pasty and his eyes red-rimmed. His horse was spent. The woman cried out, "Jed!"

Cherokee dropped his feet from the hub and turned slowly because Jed Whithrop held a gun in his grimy hand. "Wort do you no good to run or try'a do anything," Cherokee said.

Whithrop kept his eyes on Cherokee after one quick look at the woman standing there with the blanket in her arms. Whithrop bared his yellow teeth in a snarl. "Mebbe so, mebbe not. Where's your gun?" He slipped in the ground with a sinuous motion that reminded Cherokee of a snake slithering over the rocks.

"Don't carry one," Cherokee said. "Guns cost money an' so do shells."

Whithrop walked to Cherokee and slapped the head against Cherokee's ribs on both sides. He saturated himself the medicine man had no gun and then he swung up on the wagon and crawled over



the seat and disappeared beneath the cover. He was out in a moment, grinning, holding a bottle of Cherokee's Cure-All. He knocked the neck off on the wagon rim and took a long drink of the dark liquid. "Not bad," he said. He took another drink and tossed the halfempty bottle into the creek.

"That'll be your fifth," Cherokee said.

Winthrop looked at him, balancing the gun in his hand. "Charge it," he said. He put a foot on the wagon wheel and dropped to the ground. "Stay right where you are," he warned. He unstrapped his windbreaker harness and threw the saddle over the tail gate of Cherokee's wagon. He slipped the bridle and jessed that after his saddle. He took the horse by the halter and disappeared along the willows. A shot broke the stillness and in a moment he was back.

The outlaw motioned with his gun. "Get up in that wagon," he said.

Cherokee stopped to the wagon and stood there, feeling the wagon shake and hearing it creak as the killer climbed over the tailgate and pulled the canvas down. In a moment the killer's gun bared into Cherokee's back.

"Ain't aimin' to hurt nobody," Winthrop growled, less I had to. You just go long like you was before. You get me scared that river and I'll be hard to ketch."

Cherokee sat down and tilted his lines. He spoke to the horses and the wagon moved across the creek.

The edges of rutted, rocky road turned south on the sagebrush beach. Late that afternoon the wagon jolted and ground over a dry rocky wash and then swung wide to plunge downward to the river, with the timber lines of wood spanning the gorge. The canvas behind Cherokee cracked across and the gun probed him through the fold of rough cloth.

"Don't make no mistakes," Winthrop's hard voice said from behind Cherokee.

"You can't get away with it, Joe."

There was a note of hysteria in the woman's voice.

"Stand up, Nore," the voice said in the same hard note.

They came up to the river and Epperty, keeper of the toll bridge, stepped out, waving his hand to them. The old man was white-haired but still as erect as a young sapling. " Didn't see noth-

in' of Winthrop, did you, Cherokee?"

"Ain't been lookin' for him," Cherokee said shortly.

The old man cracked. "Sheriff and his men's made eaten. Better tight and all up. You'll never make Cherokee 'fore dark." He shaded his eyes and looked at the wavering sun.

"That'll cost money," Cherokee said. "I'll hold out till I get where I'm goin'."

Epperty cracked again. "Might know," he said. He raised his sharp old eyes to the woman. "Maybe your boy has a cup o' coffee, m'm'm." "Twenty cent."

"Ain't got no time to waste," Cherokee said, fiddling the gun in his spine again and hearing the joint click of a hammer drawing back.

"Dollar for the team and two bits a head," Epperty said.

Cherokee got out his leather purse and unfolded it. He deliberately counted out the money. The old man started to speak and then he stopped back and waved his hand. "So long, Cherokee," he said. "Come again."

The horses' hoofs and the wagon wheels combined to make a rumbling thunder on the bridge.

BANDITS IN BIKINIS

(Continued from page 2)



"I know I don't live here, but I've made some fortuitous mistakes in the past."

bouncing off the walls of the gorge, shooting out all other sound.

They hit the rocks and the wagon jolted and twisted. Cherokee grabbed the woman around the slender waist and jumped at the gun blotted.

The sheriff's posse were all around the wagon, with their rifles drawn and cocked. "Throw out your gun, Winthrop," the sheriff called. "Come out with hands in the air or we'll kill that woman full o' lead."

A posse landed in the dust and then Winthrop himself stood there staring at them. His reddish eyes darted from one to the other like a cowering animal, finally resting on Cherokee.

"I'll get you for that," he said.

Cherokee offered the woman his hand. "Sorry," he said, and helped her to the seat. He followed her, gathering up his forces.

By Epperly cocreated happily.

"This man, really," he said. "Any time Cherokee gives a man two bits extra, sheriff's wrong. The old man grinned. "He gives a dollar for my team 'n wagon and that was all right. It was them three two-bit pieces that made me know somebody was made. An in this country a gang just don't hide legs somebody's locality for him. That is for sure."

Cherokee spoke to his horses and they moved out into the twilight away from the bridge. Cherokee settled on Cherokee. He'd wanted the woman back; there and there'd been nothing but red on her face when Winthrop was taken. He clicked to the horses. "I guess I'm 'bout the best-known killer in these parts," he said. "Most all o' 'em think I'm a skidhill."

She was silent for a long while. Then her hand reached out and touched his toy a moment. "I like a savior man," she said quietly. ♦

Then Santangelo heard a dog growl, and he guessed what was happening. He didn't hesitate. He dumped his pack, pulled his assassin's *xx* and dropped to the stones before crawling around the corner. As he expected, three Wehrmacht soldiers and a big snarling "police dog" faced the girl. The Yankee tanker raised his head gun before the first German spotted him, and when the beefy corporal opened his mouth Santangelo put a slug through his right eye. The enemy NCO was dead before he hit the ground.

Everything happened quickly after that. The bullet-riddled gun went "pop" giddily twice more as the most reluctant volunteer of World War II dropped another German with a pair of bullets that sent him thudding off with an accurate snap-shot through the back of the neck.

At that instant, the huge Shepard growled and charged. Santangelo didn't panic. He rolled aside, observed the big dog at the side of the head as it hurtled past him and then finished it off with an accurate snap-shot through the back of the neck.

The third member of the enemy patrol turned to run as he covered about eight yards while the US tanker was busy with the four-legged animal. He might have gotten even further if then hadn't stopped him with an expertly thrown knife that penetrated five inches into his back.

"Fantastico! Fantastico!" An *ala* repeated to *ala* as she considered the lethal knife.

"I agree," crooned in the Englishman, pulling out the knife. "For an amateur at this sort of game, Lora, you are one fine shot. Smart too—you used the shears. First rate performance."

"I've heard plenty of Germans with my *ala* from the tank," the lone, sober-faced *ala* said grimly. "But I never killed anybody up close before."

"It may grow on you," the explosives specialist said grimacing. As Santangelo killed the two corpses off the trail.

That done finished, the *ala* straightened and said: "Let's get out of here."

Ten minutes of walking up the cliff path brought the *ala* to an elaborate villa at the top. They advanced through the olive groves toward the big house slowly, warily reconnoitering for any more Germans who might be prowling nearby. Satisfied that it was safe to proceed, they entered the mansion through a back door.

"Kitchen," Angels announced as she took the *ala* GI by the hand and led him through a dark room. She opened a door, guided him down a long corridor and finally flung open another heavy wooden door.

"Meet my dear sweet Mama," she urged the Allied operatives without waiting.

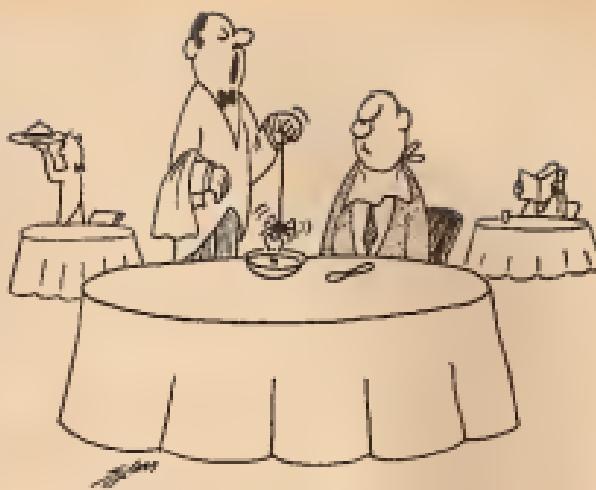
They blinked in the sudden bright-light of 40 candle. It was a wildly decorated living room, all done in glowing red velvet and cluttered with a score of medieval suits of armor. Seated on a great plush sofa in the middle of the weird scene were "Mama" and three of her friends. "Mama" was tall and eye-popping, a lurch type with long crimson hair and green tigerish eyes. The other women were equally arresting but a bit younger, perhaps 29 or maybe 30 at the outside.

They were wearing about as much as Angels.

"We are at your service," the Junoesque 38-year-old "Mama" announced proudly as she stood up and saluted. The three busty brunettes beside her also jumped to their feet to toss off equally amorous "hail-bells". Before Lou Santangelo could stop him, the irrepressible English major returned to the salutes.

"Mama" was the Contessa Maria Missaggi Travassos, an ardently anti-Fascist odd-ball who was the wealthy widow of a Sicilian nobleman killed in a sports car accident in 1938. Since then, she had become passionately involved in a remarkable assortment of causes that had included antivoglio (1940), health foods (1941) and nudism. She was the president of the Italian SunLovers Association, and had organized a score of裸體 young society women in the Lido's sun-beds into an enthusiastic local chapter.

The countess was an important cog in Operation Harpoon. OSS



"I'll have that fly out of your soup in a moment, sir."

had learned that Mussolini's undercover agents of the Fascist OVRA (the Italian Gestapo) were trying to infiltrate the main Underground organizations on the southern shores of Sicily. Behind this was a frantic Nazi effort to learn about the imminent Allied invasion from North Africa.

The uninitiated countess had al-

ready proved her devotion to the Free World by taking out several US bomber pilots shot down on raids. "She's kind of a... well, a democratic nymphomaniac," one B-24 navigator had reported to USAAF intelligence when he finally reached Tunisia, "but pretty damn stirred in her own nutty way. The Germans don't bother her at all, mostly because the commanding general of their 17th Panzers wants her more than the Iron Cross. She's playing old Rittmeister along like a catfish on a spangled line, knowing she's got him hooked and can reel him into her bedroom whenever the damn Moors."

Lou Santangelo wasn't aware of all this, but he had specific orders that he was to avoid contacting the local Underground and must reach his Uncle Rocco only through "Peter and his group". He was saucier enough to say, and realistic enough to guess that this peculiar villa might make a perfect hideout from which to strike the underground tank depot.

The 40 acres of grounds were surrounded by a nine-foot high wall topped by thorny hedge, a barrier that not only ensured the sunbathers' privacy but also screened the Operation Harpoon team from the prying eyes of any German or Fascist patrols. He made up his mind at the politeness check-bonds with the prettiest three dark-haired friends, long-legged Rosa Capelli, whose father was the mayor of Licodia, heavy-lipped Serafina Madascia who had been an Olympic swimmer for Italy before the war, and the overplay-made-up Juliette Schindler whose lengthy jet tresses failed to cover a huge swelling bosom.

After a few moments of not-quite casual conversation and a



"Miss Smith, take a lesson . . . and this time I mean it!"



"By George, I think you're right, Fatty. These aren't water wings . . ."

the cup of strong black demitasse that he nearly spilled when Signora Sandefur leaned forward to pour him the sugar). Santangelo asked to be shown to his room where he could unload his gear.

"Of course, dear captain," the totally unnamed captain said. She had decided that he must be at least a captain since he was in command, and the earnest Pfc was too weary to argue with her. "Take him up to the Green Room — just to you," the released suggested to her daughter.

The American trudged Angela up to a large bedroom on the second floor, a chamber decorated in green silk that even covered the walls. She carefully showed him the closet, the toilet — and the connecting door to her room before she left. Santangelo got the message, but it wasn't the one he had in mind at that moment. That one was the coded radio signal he had to tap out to Bleriot to let Dampsey know they had arrived safely.

Just as he finished and started to hide the compact RTR-1 short-wave transmitter, the York heard a cascade of sounds from the room above. He had a pretty fair idea of what they meant, but he tried to ignore them as he unpacked his weapons and checked each one methodically. The noise stopped. Santangelo loaded each gun, made certain the pins on all the explosive and incendiary grenades were taped down, and assembled the stripped-down bicycle that OSS had supplied "for unforeseen emergencies." Then he headed down the hall to try to find Diana.

It wasn't hard. The shirtless explosives expert was coming down the stairs from the third floor, smiling sleepily as the titan-like sergeant squeezed his arm affectionately.

"These English are so very charming," she confided to Lou Santangelo with an entirely feminine sigh that left nothing to his imagination.

At that, the exhausted GI finally threw his arms. "Lieutenant Dixon! Get the hell downstairs, collect your stuff and haul your fat butt right up to your room! Now!"

The easy-going officer gaped. "That's an order?" Santangelo rasped at the top of his lungs.

Both the dentists' spouses and the commissary workers awoke as if they'd been slapped.

"Get moving, you damn fool!" the Pfc commanded.

The sailors restored some sanity to the proceedings, and Duxie was soon asleep in his own bed with his explosives and Stan gun neatly packed within easy reach. The nubists didn't even dare to grumble, for Lou Santangelo's cutting tones had convinced them not to rile any further grief with this hard-bitten American. The captain was young and handsome, but plainly a tough "no nonsense" officer of the old school. They were a bit afraid of him — all except Angela, who was secretly pleased by his masculine authority but not intimidated.

They all slept until noon that morning. When they gathered for a breakfast served by two maid-servants the commissary had converted to sun worshippers, everyone treated Santangelo with polite respect and deference. That was hardly surprising, for he looked and acted and felt like a battle-tested commander. It was not the gun in his shoulder-holster or the flag that he placed on the chair beside him. It was his manner. With the same cool determination that had moved his mediator father so high in OSS graces, Lou Santangelo took charge of Operation Harpoon with his first cup of coffee at 1235 on the glaring morning of June 23.

"You're going to get your wish to meet my Uncle Rocco, Wilma," he told Duxie flatly.

"I'm ready," the Royal Army sapper answered quietly. An excellent fighter, much himself, the Briton realized that the party was over and it was time to get to work.

"Fine, Angela. I want you to put some clothes on and go into town," the American tankie commanded. "Do you know a man in Liguria named Rocco Santangelo?"

"People say that he is of the Black Brotherhood, one of the most powerful clubs," Angela answered evenly, looking the young York straight in the eye. "He pretends to make his money from a winery, but everyone knows he is a cargo medico — a healer."

"To be a *Fascista*?"

"He is a *mafioso* don. They have no politics, no creed but that of the jungle."

"Good. Go to the wherry," the OSS recruit directed, "and tell him that Don Antonio's son wishes to discuss a matter of great importance. Say that Luigi Santangelo has come from America, but speak only to him — no others."

"I will do whatever you wish," Angela promised simply.

Then she left. Two hours later, she returned with word that Donco Santangelo had been both impious and non-committal but had finally agreed to meet "Don Antonito's son from America" in the same warehouse that night at 11 o'clock.

At 9:30 that night, he set out with the 18-year-old girl for the long, circuitous, like through by-pass fields, olive groves, rock lanes and single trails that would bypass the Nazi checkpoints ringing Locria.

It was 10:30 pm when they finally reached the crumbling stone wall that enclosed Donco Santangelo's property. Though he had changed to a coarse dark suit of a Sicilian peasant, the young Gil wasn't taking any chances on being seen by enemy guards that regularly cross-crossed Locria to enforce the curfew. They had almost certainly discovered the bodies by the cliff, and the tee was bound to be extrajudicial and quick on the trigger. Keeping to the shadows in the alley across the narrow cobblestoned street, the American listened for any脚步声 that might signal danger.

He heard something—the sound of breathing in the alley itself. He turned around quickly as it was whisper something to Angelia, leaped toward her — and charged at the invisible ambusher. He saw the glint of a blade in the faint moonlight, reared aside and grabbed the attacker's wrist. It



"Dad, give me that balance sheet having to work here. You get right out of that bar and come right straight home . . . This has been a recorded message."

snapped her a pencil, and the male worker's scream of pain was choked off only by three swift judo chops to Adam's apple, temple and neck. Santangelo heard

him fall with a thud. The American quickly ripped off the man's bowtie, cracked it into his mouth, doubled him up like a folding pingpong table, and tied his hands and feet together with the unconscious assailant's own belt.

"Fantastico!" his lovely bra-
vatic wife sighed in admiration.
"That's it," Lou Santangelo an-
swered in impudent bravado.

The shot was clear, and there was no sound of anyone approaching. Slipping the victim into his own belt, the lean York hustled the girl across the street and raped at the door marked "Vino Santangelo". It opened immediately, and they hurried inside without a word. Two faced men glared at them in unspoken question. Lou Santangelo recognized their looks. These were "workmen", the lower-middle-middle types who carried out routine beatings and unimportant executions.

"Don Rico — immediately," he ordered harshly as a cage without words.

They obeyed at once, for in the brutal Brotherhood "workmen" did what they were told without daring to think or hesitate. They led him across the courtyard, between two long rows of dusty trucks to the storhouse itself. One of the hoodlums pointed toward the brass-studded old door, and the American led Angelia into a huge vaulted room crammed with hundreds of barrels. In the center — some 30 yards away — a hairy man who resembled a barrel personage waited beside a glowing kerosene lamp.

"I come in the name of Don Antonito from Chicago," the York called out boldly as he advanced toward the circle of light.



"Aren't I glad Haven't seen you since we were kids . . . you haven't changed a bit!"



"Oh, those? . . . I washed out a pair of gloves and put them on the oil to dry . . ."

He knew that a dozen guns were covering him, and that his first false move would also be his last. He walked closer until he saw the fat man clearly.

"Welcome to Locita, my nephew," the stocky stranger croaked.

Lou Santangelo's reply was an off-hand as Operation Hailstone. He pulled back his hand and slapped the fat man as hard as he could across the mouth.

"Stop these indecent games!" he shouted. "Are the Staffied of Locita all children? Is this the way to greet the son of a great don?"

Angela wondered whether he'd gone insane. Her thought was interrupted by a lead echoing gunfire, a reverberation below that hammered and reverberated off the wooden walls as a prying knowledge had stepped out of the black Mass.

"It is Luigi! Luigi! What a boy! Just like his papa!" the sweaty well-dressed man in the dark suit

softly rejoiced. "It's my brother's boy from Chicago!" he called out proudly.

Lou Santangelo, who had recalled the family photo he'd seen so many times in his youth, recognized that this was the real Fuccio. Half a dozen other tumors blazed suddenly on all sides, and it seemed the fat man closed in with noisy greetings. His bunch had paid off, for he'd guessed what they expected from the offspring of a top US racketeer. Now he had to play it to the tilt.

"Take your hand, Uncle Rocco," he announced in the traditional congenital salutation that the Brotherhood ascertained a don.

During the next hour, Lou Santangelo forced down half a bottle of sour-sweet red wine and told the leaders of the local Brotherhood what he wanted. They had to help him find the Nazi's secret cave, and to co-operate in crippling the 17th Panzer's tanks stored there.

"Not as easy this week. Stinkin' patrols everywhere. The Tedeschi are courageous since this morning when they found three of their men and a dog wiped out by the chink," one of the Macondo declared.

"My captives took two of the soldiers and the wolf-creature all by himself," Angela boasted.

"Button your lip," the tall GI told her curtly. It was stupid to talk about such things to anyone, for nobody could tell who might be a Nazi stoolie-pawn. The girl looked as if she were about to cry at the rebuke, but she remained silent while the American concluded the arrangements with his bearded uncle. "The Brotherhood takes care of its own." Rocco Santangelo puffed solemnly a moment before his nephew led her out for the hazardous journey back to the villa.

Angela walked all the way, went to her room in bitter silence. The PFC from the Third Armored tried to forget her while he escaped and radioed another report to OSS in Sicilia, but as he flushed he could hear her sobbing through the connecting door. First he cursed her vanity, then he swore at Dumovsky and Larsen for getting him into this miserable deal, and finally he went in to apologize. He sat down swarishly on the edge of the bed to try to comfort her, reached out to pat her slim, warm shoulder reassuringly. That did it. Before he could speak, Angela was against him . . .

The next afternoon, a milk vendor delivered a note from "Uncle" reporting that one of his wine trucks had passed a Wehrmacht gasoline convoy rolling five and a half miles west of Locita. The Sicilian driver had attempted to follow the German tankie vehicles only to be stopped by eight heavily armed MP's who warned him to stay out of "this restricted military area."

While Lou Santangelo was sweating out the search for the secret base of the 17th Panzer, the ABW/9th counter-intelligence unit attached to that German division were trying just as hard to find him. Their monitors had picked up his coded flashes to OSS and efficient radio-location teams were prowling the rural roads in D-F vans nightly. Expecting that the fat would be stuck trucks with direction-finding equipment, Santangelo and Doong hiked or bicycled several miles from the earliest hour for each transmission. They went from a different location every time, and kept the messages down to the 60 "number groups" that OSS had recommended. Once, for an important message, they even sat up the radio in a tent-shelter on the beach, while Nazi tanks and trucks rumbled by on the road only a few yards away. Lt Col Dumovsky kept radioing back urgently for "positive action," which came more rapidly than the Allied teams in Sicily expected.

In the pre-dawn hours of July 5, Lou Santangelo was tapping out

a message from a ruined barn north of town while the English demolition expert perched as sentry on the half-gutted roof. As soon as the American finished, he heard the regular code signal that meant "Please repeat because reception poor". He started to do so and actually sent three-quarters of his report a second time before he was interrupted. A dagger thudded into the floor only inches from his feet, and he looked up to see Duxay waving frantically. The sniper had tossed the knife to warn him. When the midwesterner heard the roar of an approaching vehicle, he guessed why.

He was right. Only 300 yards away was a German staff car, its probing搜索探照灯 pointed directly at the barn. As it passed closer slowly, Lou Santangelo edged back into the darkness and drew two grenades from the pockets of his shabby peasant's jacket. The enemy truck stopped right in front of the sagging building, and four Germans with machine-pistols stepped out.

They were only a few yards from the doorway portal when "Willy" Duxay hammered them to the ground with one seven-second burst from his Bren. At the instant that the British nailed them to the earth, Santangelo lobbed his first grenade under the van. It exploded with a blast that buckled the truck chassis, which erupted into flames three seconds later when the GI flipped a thermite bomb into the wreckage.

"This is going to make old General Pittmeister even more sternly," the veteran British bombardier-torpedo operator predicted.

"It isn't helping my digestion either," Santangelo snapped as he packed up the radio swiftly. He knew Duxay was right, that the Nazis would be furious about this massacre — and would mercilessly "root" the whole province with roundups and raids to hunt down



"I thought I had nothing to live for until a friend introduced me to my wife... now all I think of is a revenge."

the offenders. The young GI should have been worried, but he was annoyed instead.

His outlook didn't improve at all when they got back to the Villa, for 10 Wehrmacht motorcyclists stood jostling in the driveway guarding an imposing staff car that flew the guidon of a German general. Santangelo and Duxay dropped to the ground, stared from the shrubbery at the tall bullet-headed man who stood

in the window pouring wine for the colonel. It was the first time that the American had seen her with her clothes on, and also his first look at the commandant of the 17th Pz-Brig.

"Private Santangelo, meet Major General Otto Koenig, Pittmeister," the same demolition expert whispered mockingly.

The lean midwesterner swore. Two of Pittmeister's aides were busy peeling down the lowest gowns of Bergera Fedotoff and the top-heavy Juliette Sandolina, and the sound of photograph music made it clear what was happening. The unpredictable colonel was embarrassing the enemy brass, whose loose and loud laughter confirmed that they were enjoying it immensely.

Lou Santangelo and his partner had to wait in the green-bordered thicket until nearly 3:00 am when the Germans finally departed with much hand kissing, hand clicking and a few discreet pinches. After the echoes of the Nazi caravan faded down the road, the Allied agents entered to find the sun-downer ladies shedding their dresses to return to their usual comfortable nudity. A black-and-white mark on Signorina Fedotoff showed how hard the punches had been. All three women trusted that the Nazis had arrived uninvited with the pretext that they "just been passing by".

"Maybe. Maybe they're just getting chased, but they're not alone," Santangelo warned. "Don't try to outsmart those Germans — just stay away from them or you'll



"I'll bring you a cigarette next trip."



"You don't encourage snail do you, Reynard?"

tip our hand by asking the wrong questions?"

"But they can tell us about the cave," posited the titan-topped engineer.

"We'll get the information some other and safer way," the Yank ordered.

It arrived the next afternoon, in one of the Mata chieftain's white trucks. Rocco Sartorius himself was the driver — and the messenger. A good farmer had seen 11 tanks being hauled toward the great stone crag that was known locally as Sabor's Peak, a massive black promontory overlooking the coast just miles west of Licota.

"That must be the place," the Brotherhood boss assured his nephews. "There used to be plenty of smuggler's caves up there, and the Triadites could easily have blasted out the walls between a dozen of them to make that one giant garage you see. I propose that we attack at once, and I have brought my men."

The young American glanced at all the track and no one.

"There are 15 of my toughest 'warriors' concealed inside the empty barrels," Don Rocco explained seriously, "and I've brought two more empty cases for you and your helpers. We'll pass through the checkpoints, wipe out the sentries near the cave and shoot our way in to bomb those tanks with your excellent Yankees the grenades."

"I'm willing to try it," the mid-westerner answered after a few seconds. "What do you think, Will?"

"Damn chancery because they'll have more troops inside, but I'll take a whack at it," the Englishman agreed.

leader snarled something to the Nazi soldiers, then an exchange of laughter as the vehicle picked up speed again. It was 4:30 by the time the truck passed the third energy post, and at 5:00 it arrived to a crashing halt.

"Everybody out," Romeo Santangelo urged as he dropped the tall-
gate.

One by one, the 16 half-silhouetted readers wriggled from their pitch-black process to stand blinking and stretching in the still bright July sunlight. Two of the 'tourists' vomited, and another crumpled while his crumpled legs gave way under him. Within 10 minutes, however, they were all moving slowly in a long skirmish-line toward the mountain only a mile away. They get to within 200 yards of the black volcanic crag before their pale merrily bawled up in their faces.

One of the Medevac hit an invisible trip-wire, setting off the buried charge that killed him instantly. Another stepped on a "boomerang" mine that flew up into the air, exploding a rain of steel bearings that reduced him to agony. Two more booby-traps went off before a Nixon mortar crew began pounding this patch of woods with round after round, the blasts barely covering the alarm sirens that began to wail; a hidden call to the security troops in a nearby camouflaged bunker. The rebels fought back courageously, killing more than 30 of the 100 men rifling, submachine weapons and Odd-warped grenades as they stubbornly tried to stand their ground.



"What does David do in David's time?"

It was hopeless. The "workmen" and the two Allied agents were outnumbered seven to one by bat-ta-taged soldiers, and nine of the attackers perished before Roots Santangelo yelled the order to withdraw. They started to run, but only five made reach the truck. They jumped aboard as the Mafia chief gunned the motor desperately, roaring away only seconds before their "Wehrmacht" gunners burst on to the road with machine-guns blazing. They had to abandon the truck two miles away, splitting up as the sun began to descend. The rough track toward Licata was a nightmare, for not only were dozens of mortared paths cut, but the avenging German Luftwaffe sent up five light Storch observation planes to drop flares.

It was a miracle that Lou Santangelo and Dixon somehow staggered into the villa at dawn, panting and pelted by the total bloodletting. The situation looked completely hopeless. It was July 7. Allied troops would be landing in Sicily within 22 hours, and Santangelo's hordes hitting the Licata beaches would be smashed head-on by Rittmeister's concealed airstrike. With the Mafia wrecked, Operation Harpoon seemed doomed.

"We don't have the men or the explosives," Santangelo croaked grimly. All of Dixon's plastic had been lost in the wild cross-country escape, and rods could be purchased on or off CBB in time.

All that day the German search planes zig-zagged over the whole area. The roads were closed to civilian traffic "until further notice", for Rittmeister was taking no further chances. Now that the Neapolitan general realized what was up, he sealed off every gully and track that led toward his key underground base.

That night after dinner, the rather Combese Maria Mischa Tivencio came up with a plan of her own.

"Absolutely crackers," judged Willis Dixon.

"Natty. Natty. Natty. It can't possibly work," concurred Lou Santangelo.

"Mama's notions are . . . strange, but do you have any better suggestion?" said Angela, raised slightly.

Santangelo shook his head. Dixon shook his head. They glanced at the woman, shrugged and nodded. It was a million-to-one chance, but they had to try it.

At 30 am on the morning of July 9, seven semi-nude women and two determined men set out from the Villa Travassos in the moonlight to attack one of the most impregnable bases in Nazi Europe. The males were wearing their uniforms, for if they were to perish on this suicide mission they wanted to die as soldiers. The strange column trudged silently to the cliff, descended the trail to the beach where Santangelo and Dixon had landed and retrieved the hidden raft. They in-



Chas
Roe

"Isn't that the lady who christened this ship last month?"

flated it with a tank of cooking gas, and the men climbed aboard it with their hoses and the banisters. The women surrounded the float as it drifted off the sand, and began towing it slowly up the coast. Under the leadership of ex-Olympic swimmer Svenn Nachsch, they paddled steadily with the help of the swift moving current that carried them west. The two Allied agents, each festooned with socks of grenades, were surprised by the speed that their queer craft made up the rocky shore.

Shortly before five o'clock, the tired but proud women pulled the raft up on a narrow rocky shelf at the base of the towering black crag. The entire group huddled themselves together with a safety rope, and started to climb the almost sheer wall.

Sometimes — by sheer stubbornness — the young American finally led his cold flesh up on to the top 50 minutes later. They were still

clinging with fatigue and their muscles were twitching, but they untied themselves and took their bearings. They were less than 200 yards from the gaping mouth of the cave. A tommygun being guard dozed on each side of the opening, facing inland because everyone with any brains knew that the cliff could not be scaled.

The raiders moved closer. When they were 10 yards from the opening, they could see the illumination cast by powerful floodlights inside. They were inside the main bldk, as they walked around until they could peer directly into the shaft. It was an amazing sight, a huge, high-coaled chamber with several tanks only 20 yards inside. Santangelo put down his bayonets, pulled the assassin's gun and silently slew one of the sentries. The other raised his machine pistol as he saw his partner approach, and the sharpshooter mid-winter cut him down with two more bullets.



"She certainly manages to get out of a dress just about everything she puts into it."

As he fell, the German's Schmeisser hit the rocks with a noisy clatter. The impact released the safety catch, and the automatic gun shattered an ear-splitting burst that wiped out any chance of surprise. Five more soldiers charged up the tunnel toward the mouth, only to be whipsawed by bursts from the British in the arms of the corridor and her young daughter. Aghast at the sight of the half-nude woman and shocked by the sudden attack, the Wehrmacht survivors decided back to avoid the grenades being thrown by Dixie and the two maids.

At that moment, busty Juliette Sardou and long-legged Rosetta Capelli sprinted forward to try to seize the gun dropped by the dead soldier. As they reached the corpse, a sudden roar belched from the mouth of the cave. Lou Santangelo saw one of the massive Tiger tanks rolling forward, picking up speed as a Nazi lieutenant yelled orders.

The tall, thin Gil dropped low, raised his bazooka and sighted carefully. The enemy vehicle was only 20 feet from the opening when Lou Santangelo pressed the trigger. He didn't miss. The rocket blazed swift and true to its mark, penetratin the Tiger's hull and exploding loads to wipe out the crew instantly. The tank erupted into flame, belching choking black smoke that blinded the other Germans inside the subterranean base. The fire reached the Tiger's carbon shells, which began to

blast deafeningly in all directions.

"Let's go!" the American ordered. He turned around, saw that two of his nude commandos were dead and another was bleeding from a bullet wound in her stomach. She tried to crawl toward the shaft in



"How you been cooking her? That's the same line that landed me."

one final effort, but her life was looking out on the rocks too swiftly.

Santangelo hustled Dixie and the four remaining women back to the cliff, and they went down a lot faster than they had scaled it. Crashed and bruised on the sharp volcanic projections, they reached the bottom just as they left the whole side of the mountain shoulder. Something had exploded inside the cave — something big.

They launched the raft, all climbed aboard and let it drift out in the current. The tide was running even stronger now, so they were a mile away when the entire top of Satan's Peak was blasted off in an enormous explosion. A huge pillar of fire spewed skyward, resembling the nightmare scene of an eruption of Mount Astrea.

The current carried the raft out into the Mediterranean, where a mine-sweeper covering the advance of the Allied invasion flotilla picked them up that night.

Less than nine hours after their rescue, U.S., British and Canadian armies stormed ashore on Sicily. There was heavy fighting for Patton's troops near Licata, but they broke inland because the enemy had almost no tanks in the immediate vicinity. The fantastic climb and dangerous mission saved thousands of U.S. lives.

Lou Santangelo, who got a battlefield commission for his exploit, later married young Angela Travissino. She inherited the "countess" title in 1958 when her mother died, but doesn't talk to her California neighbors about her noble name. Under strict orders from her investment banker husband, she never mentions Operation Thermom either. *

NERVY MISSION

(Continued from page 25)

O'Keefe, apparently, intended to fly out to Hallett's Rock and back—and then, perhaps, report to the authorities. That was a pretty serious thing to do.

What was going to happen if O'Keefe struck trouble out there? A man could lose his license over a thing like that—ignoring authority. The book laid down some pretty strict regulations. It was unthinkable . . . against all training, reasonableness and authority.

On the other hand, what the devil would happen if the Auster developed engine trouble? And what about navigation? Hallett's Rock was a pretty small pinpoint to hit on the nose even with an expert navigator in charge. And what about the margin of safety—the point of no return? It was all very well for O'Keefe to say he'd have 20 minutes time to fly around the rock and still have 10 minutes of fuel left when he returned to base. In theory he might have . . . but you couldn't always rely on theory.

Realizing they were all still watching him, Saul knew he had to say something. "They must be someone else who will go with you," he said lamely. Inwardly he felt guilty and depressed. He knew he had failed somewhere—but he wasn't quite sure where. Even mercy missions had to be looked at rationally.

"I hoped it might be you," O'Keefe said pointedly. "I want to get some sleep. By the time I look around town and get someone it could be after midnight. I'd never go by myself than waste all that time."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Sinclair. Jean introduced Saul and related a brief account of the evening. "Car's going out to Hallett's Rock at dawn, and John's going with him," she finished.

Saul nodded his head. It was the only thing he could do.

"How wonderful!" Mrs. Sinclair looked at Tim O'Keefe. She was an older version of her daughter and John and Saul admired her. "I'll go and eat some sandwiches."

"No—no," O'Keefe said hurriedly. "We'll have a snack before taking off. We'll be back for breakfast."

"And a large thermos of coffee." Mrs. Sinclair was tickling off her chores mentally. Then she looked at Tim. "I wasn't thinking of you or John—survivors. They might be starving. You can drop the food to them. I'll pack it in a good strong hamper."

"Thanks," O'Keefe said simply. "Thanks a lot, Ruth. I wasn't thinking of that."

Hallett's Rock came up slowly out of the brightening day ahead . . . a darkening line on the horizon and off on the starboard bow of the Auster. Saul pointed to it with a sense of relief.

O'Keefe grunted, "Not off my



"You're probably wondering what I'm doing here . . ."

course." He sounded disgusted with his navigation. With the changed course, the golden pathway of the sun across the sea shifted from right to the left.

Saul looked down at the sea, conscious of the fear that had ridden with him for the whole time. The tension built up inside him. He fought it down for the 20th time—A muscle, a real and compelling fear. Only once before had he flown in as small a plane . . . a 20-minute joy ride in a Tiger Moth for the fun of it.

The Auster, small and cramped with its single noisy engine out front, gave him no confidence. And the sea beneath was too close for his liking. He was used to seeing the Pacific from great heights. From up there where the jets separated, the sea was a great rolling grey cloud that was meaningless in its utter remoteness. But here, in the noisy, slow Auster, the sea paralleled in being too real—it had been like that all the way—and it would be like that all the way back to Sase.

There was no chance of survival if the engine packed up. Not a lifeboat, or a boat anywhere in the cabin. O'Keefe had just climbed into the plane and set off over the ocean.

Saul argued mentally that a man of O'Keefe's experience would have seen to all such things before he left. The obvious things . . . a few life-belts . . . a survival kit . . . the correct course. Hell! There wasn't even a map!

Yet, strangely enough, Hallett's Rock had come out of the horizon to greet them. Saul was still unable to conceive a point on that. It could have been sheer luck. Even O'Keefe had admitted he'd been off course a little.

"Thirty-and wind down there." O'Keefe broke into his thoughts. Saul looked up at the inverted blue bowl of the sky, finding the sickness again. How the devil did the man know that. By the same token, how the devil had he found his way to the rock with nothing but a compass to guide him. With

out being really conscious of it, Saul felt renewed respect for the older man.

"There, you fly her while I take a *gander* with the glasses," O'Keefe said suddenly. With a shock Saul realized he was being asked to fly the Auster. His mind receded. The altimeter showed 500 feet above the sea—the scraped indicator to. He felt he couldn't do it. He wished enough to prove with. He had only to make one mistake—one slight miscalculation in making a decision—and they'd finish up in the drink. "I can't fly the damned thing!" he protested angrily.

"It's no good a time to learn as ever there," O'Keefe grumbled. "What to do is plastered on every knot and hooper . . . written in plain English and, believe me, they're right."

Saul did not feel rebuffed. He was beginning to know this man. He put his hands on the stick gingerly and debated with his feet. Opening the throttle a little, he was surprised to find that things did happen in response to his simple movements. The Auster,

O'Keefe had told him earlier, would almost fly herself.

"Bring her down to 200," O'Keefe said briskly, "and ease up on the gas. There's no lower out here." He was busy squaring the approaching reef with the glasses.

The sense of responsibility flooded in on Saul. Twenty minutes flying time at the reef . . . 150 miles back over the sea . . . 15 minutes fuel left when they reached Sava. The margin was too small for comfort. He felt the sweat break out on the palms of his hands, knowing that his fear was becoming a real thing now. If he didn't watch it carefully he'd lose control of himself and the plane.

"There she is!" O'Keefe barked, startling Saul. "It's the Boy—high and dry on her side. Drop down and pull out at 100 and get 'em a burst, as we go over. They might be asleep."

Fever prickling down his spine, Saul let the Auster fall away, her engine muttering. His arms and legs felt like tensed springs. It was hard for him even to breathe. "Hell," O'Keefe roared, "show

her nose down, son. We'll miss by a nail!"

Instinctively Saul pressed on the stick. The Auster seemed to hang in the sky, nose down, while the sea rushed up to welcome them.

"Pull her nose up!" O'Keefe roared. "Do you want to get our feet wet?"

Saul pulled back on the stick, opened the throttle—and with a surge of power the Auster clanged for the sky.

"That ought to finish 'em out!" O'Keefe yelled. "Here they come! One . . . two . . . three. Where the hell is Carm?"

"There's 12 minutes left," Saul interrupted.

"So what?" O'Keefe snapped. "There's more than plenty. Fly down the eastern side of the reef and up the other. Maybe Carm's gone off on her own."

Saul looked, catching a glimpse of the long narrow reef rising from the sea as the Auster came round, then straightened to the southeast.

"Well, that's that," O'Keefe said presently. "Come round and fly up the other side—and here's hoping—" His voice trailed off as if he didn't want to complete his thoughts.

Saul glanced at his watch—eight and a half minutes left. Not much longer to the point of no return. He saw the gun move away from his left side, then, a moment or so later, appear on his right. He opened the throttle, wanting to get this thing over and done with—and head back to the security of land . . . if they could reach it.

"I wouldn't do that," O'Keefe observed quietly. "She's more sentimental on gun where you had her."

Raising the throttle back, Saul suppressed his growing anxiety. O'Keefe gave a convulsive start, thrusting himself up from his seat and half out the open window, bimcular glued to his eye.

"There she is! On that stoll where the palms are! Drop down until a get a better look, boy. You, there's the stiff! That's better—keep her down here."

His body was still as the plane crossed up the eastern side of the reef. "It's Carm, all right. And do you know what she's doing? Painting those damned palms against the rising sun!" He burst into thunderous laughter, interlaced with loud exhortations of despair. "Can you beat that! Shipwrecked! Painting bloomin' palms against the sunrise! She hardly had time to look up and wave as we flew past. What a woman. Where would you find another woman like her?"

Saul put the Auster's nose up, pleased to get distance between himself and the sea. Five minutes left. He felt the sweat on his palms again. Did O'Keefe realize that time was running out? He mentioned it to the older man.

"Rubish!" O'Keefe snarled. "If you have five minutes fuel left—or even three—when you get to

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MATABELE VIRGIN DANCE

(Continued from page 12)

Even more intriguing was the mystery surrounding Lobengula's treasure after he died. It took more than half a century of intensive searching to find the grave of the Matabele ruler. But the recent discovering of the grave only intensified the mystery of Lobengula's hidden wealth — a cache of diamonds and gold estimated to be worth anywhere from \$60,000,000 to \$50,000,000 dollars at the least.

So the search for Lobengula's treasure goes on, but a few clues recently found, indicate that it could soon be over — unless Lobengula's old chief, the induna, who were by his side when he died, planted the clues to mislead treasure-seekers.

Lobengula was the son of the redoubtable Zulu warrior-king Montezuma ("The Pathway of Blood"), who crossed the Limpopo into what is now Northern Rhodesia and founded his own tribe,

the Matobes ("Children of the Stars").

After Mosilikatso's death in 1870 he was succeeded by Lobengula. This was the year that Cecil Rhodes landed in Africa. Kimberley's diamond fields were discovered, and Jan Smuts was born. According to custom, Lobengula built himself a new capital called Bulawayo ("The Place of Killing"), where he wedded his war-heroes into a formidable military machine and became the most powerful monarch in Africa.

Lobengula adopted European clothing and wore a stiff of bacon tails and a bejeweled crown. Although he allowed Christian missionaries into his country, he never became a Christian himself, preferring the superstitions of Nanga, his witch doctor, who lived in a cave in the lonely Matopos.

This gloomy cavern held such a fascination even for Cecil Rhodes that the great Empire builder expressed a wish to be buried there, his tomb lying in a spot he named "The View of the World."

Lobengula's reign coincided with the great gold and diamond rushes in Africa. The first diamonds to come into his possession were smuggled in by his subjects — secreted under armpits, in hollow teeth, or by swallowing them — and presented as tribute. Fascinated by the shining stones, for which the white men would commit any crime to obtain, Lobengula set about getting as many of them as possible. He heard that Rhodes was having difficulty recruiting sufficient labor to work his mines and offered to supply him with several thousands of his subjects as workers.

Rhodes accepted this "generous" offer and soon great droves of the Matobes went to work in the diamond fields. Lobengula changed the gangs every few months, and each returning Matobes brought his king a shiny tribute in Richard Diamond, mostly uncut Kimberley blue-which.

Lobengula also developed a weakness for champagne. The wine came to Bulawayo by the wagon load, presented by European concession seekers in return for the right to dig for gold. The metal which later led Rhodes to take over Matobes' land, stock and barrel.

Nanga the witch doctor warned the Monarch against the encroaching fortune seekers pouring into the kingdom, prophesying that the whites would eventually devour the Matobes' lands like swarms of hungry locusts. Lobengula, however, was no fool. To everyone, whether British concession seeker or Boer hunter, he gave a little to maintain peace. He knew the folly of resisting the whites.

In 1888 Rhodes, though barely 26, reached the peak of his power, creating the world's mightiest diamond combine by amalgamating all the Kimberley mines, and becoming the most powerful political figure in Africa. A man of ambitious greed, Rhodes now turned his attention to extending control of another of South Africa's resources — gold.

The only man who stood in the way of his becoming the master of the entire Transvaal gold of the entire Transvaal gold of gold was Paul Kruger, the great Boer leader, in whose domain most of the mines lay. Kruger, with his own ambitions of gaining power, entered into a secret pact with Lobengula. No sooner had the Matobes royal "Seal of the Great Elephant" been affixed on the pact than German emissaries sent by Bismarck appeared in Bulawayo to negotiate a similar treaty.

Rhodes, alarmed that his schemes might be wrecked, sent a representative to Lobengula offering — in return for reneging the Matobes' king's treaty with Kruger, and in return for the right to develop the minerals and minerals of Matobes — a monthly stipend of 100 pounds for life.

The messenger who brought this provocative offer to Loben-

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gina was Kurt, and his wife Eryette.

It's an ironic note of history which caused fate to smile on Rhodes.

Eryette was already the talk of the Kimberley district. She was the only Afro-European who had cracked the white man's social world. Such news had travelled fast into the bush. And when she decided to accompany her husband to the Matabele stronghold, Lobengula — himself of Zulu forbearers — had planned to honor her.

The honor was to participate with him in the diamond ritual. Knowing the road of the white man, the wily king had taken no chances. He had placed von Brandt under "protective arrest" so that the engineer would not interrupt the proceedings.

Two days following the ritual, von Brandt and his wife, still fearing the worst, were brought once more before the king. They were given clothes and welcomed as the honored guests at a feast.

The engineer finally brought up Rhodes' offer of the lifeless Zulu.

The king looked long and hard at Kurt, then cast a similar look at the now fully-clad and with drawn Eryette. And against the protests of his counsellors, he agreed to accept the offer. He bade von Brandt to return to Cape Colony to notify Rhodes.

The astonished engineer agreed. Kurt and his wife returned home under the full protection of 20 Matabele warriors.

As they walked out of the bush, von Brandt finally had the courage to ask his half-Zulu wife about that terrible night. Had she been afraid? Certainly. Why had she weakly walked in the playroom? Knowledge, she replied. What knowledge, von Brandt asked.

"A Zulu chief," she explained, "cannot defile his office by having love with a woman outside the tribe. He couldn't have made love to me even if he'd wanted to," the black-eyed Eryette continued. "The Matabele were once Zulus. They are honorable men."

Lobengula was to find that the British were not so honorable. His wise men had been right. The Matabele were docile.

The late Lobengula found he was trapped into giving up most of his lands, and tried to back out of the deal. Rhodes, threatening to enforce his part of the bargain, marched in on Bulawayo with a strong force of British troops.

Lobengula quickly placed all his treasure-filled salas in a caravan of ox carts, set afire to Bulawayo, and with his favorite general, Marwengwe, his secretary, two native chiefs and an Indian regiment, fled northward into the jungle.

Fearing that the heavily-laden carts would slow down their flight, Lobengula ordered the treasure to be buried in a

isolated spot. After the robbers had excavated holes and buried the salas, he executed all of them, so that the secret of the hiding place might be kept among as few as possible. The secretary, fearing his own safety, quietly deserted Lobengula.

Lobengula escaped across the Shangani (a tributary of the Zambezi) only to be killed by natives. As he lay dying, the king summoned the five natives who had accompanied him, gave them to secrecy regarding the hiding place of the treasure and ordered them to make their peace with Rhodes to avoid further bloodshed. The king then recited a psalm of peace, with Marwengwe following suit.

The secret of Lobengula's grave was kept for more than half a century, until it was revealed by a Matabele rain goddess who betrayed it to her white lover.

When the Native Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia and a small government party, at the request of the surviving natives who had accompanied Lobengula's flight, examined the king's grave they found only a skull and a few crushed bones — and the embossed chair presented to the king by Queen Victoria.

The old chief looked on in silence, then one of them said, "It was our desire that the grave should never be found and its secret never revealed. But now there is no reason why we should remain silent any longer."

Through the story of Lobengula's buried treasure came to light for the first time, along with details of the king's last days. But none of the chief's words over a word on the whereabouts of the treasure.

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RETURN TO GLORY

(Continued from page 33)

Now they sat and waited—silent and a little bored— for the hero to strike this fear-stricken parody of a matador.

Midway through the pitiful farce the bull stopped suddenly in a charge and barked. The Wolf jumped back, but too late. The tip of the horn had ripped the shirt open from right to left. The Wolf stared down stupidly at the bleeding whiteness of the rib before the blood quickly turned it sour.

And then suddenly with the letting of the blood it seemed as if some mystic rite had been performed upon him—as if the bull had been a priest spilling blood to create life.

The bear had gone like some gribing ghost torn from his shoulder. The drawing of his own blood had purged him of it like a wound healed in fire.

Suddenly again the fist was firm, the wrist was deft, the eye was clear.

The matador weaved and twirled, a sort of magic turning the bull, roystering, trapping, defusing. The bull charged again and again, horns churning the sand dangerously, horns vainly seeking vulnerable flesh.

The crowd came alive from its frozen silence, cheering, clanging to its feet.

The bull, breathing heavily, stopped charging and stood glaring, head down.

The Wolf, sword in hand, poised himself and called to the bull.

It came at last, a towering monster making one last ferocious attempt to destroy this creature that had changed from a frightened target smelling of fear to a dancing tiger of maddening savagery.

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The Wolf waited, feet nailed to the ground, and the screams of the women had come before he moved. He went in over the horns, the sword striking his silver lightning.

The bull staggered and then went on, the sword half-deep between the shoulders. He turned and charged again—and in the middle of the charge dropped to his knees and died.

The Wolf walked back to the fence, the crowd going away.

The old sword master spit and grunted. "Loro, matador—but great."

The Wolf grunted back.

"Thanks, oldman."

He looked up at her and he could see her smiling, waving, and even where he was he could see the tears on her cheeks...

He went down to the car with them, the hard-eyed man driving.

"I thought it was a waste of time but I came back and watched. At first you were terrible but later—later man, you were a matador, a dream. Wolf held those promotions up to ransom—will make thousands—millions. I'll see you don't fight for less than—"

They had reached the car and the girl got in. She gave The Wolf a long look, full of the natural disconcert of a woman. She said softly, "You're not coming, are you?"

He shot a quick look at her and then he relaxed, smiling. He shook his head.

The hard-eyed man stared, thunderstruck. "Not coming? What—how—"

The girl ignored him. She said, looking steadily at The Wolf. "You did it to see if you were still a man. Now that you've found out you are you're going to settle for that vacada with her aren't you?"

He nodded. The hard-eyed man spluttered, "What foolishness is this? What?"

The girl said, "Let there be lack, matador. Stop squirming and get in. Pass. You'll have to find another horseman."

He turned and went back inside. The boy, seeing him coming, started to run to him, screaming: "El Lobo— El Lobo— you're not going away. Mama, mama—he's not leaving—"

He picked the boy up and walked toward her. She stood waiting, speechless, loving him with her eyes.

He thought, We're going to be okay on that farm. *

BOOBY-TRAPPED

(Continued from page 33)

But of the words are arranged so that, the instant we make the phone contact we made, well, that's that. It's the final call as far as he is concerned. A certain twisted satisfaction to it in addition because virtually he is his own executioner—he's even sort of lifting the liability of his crime—destroys him. Destroy him completely because the charge exploded directly beside him. Instant death guaranteed.

All this was churning through my mind as I dropped to my knees beside the table. I gave a sort of half-shout. There they were. The thin, practically invisible wires. And there was the dictator and the charged. My hands were trembling as I reached forward to render the dictator harmless. So much so that I had to stop for a moment to get myself under control. And then, practically before I knew it, the job was done and the entire device disconnected. With a sigh of relief I leaned back on my heels my hand hovering over the top of the table. I forced a smile. Then it happened—the phone started ringing.

Automatically, despite everything, my hand reached out toward it. My confused brain managed to flash the warning signal just in time.

My hand stopped, then slowly withdrew. Lifting that receiver would be tantamount to putting an announcement in the papers informing that the booby-trap had failed. Because chances were that the caller was the death-merchant himself endeavoring to set off his own booby-trap. If I answered it and got beyond the word, "Hello", he'd realize straight away that something had gone wrong. Immediately he'd proceed with some alternative or standby plan to dispose of me. And I wanted time. I desperately wanted time in order that I could try to trap my would-be killer. So I let the phone keep on ringing.

I rose. While so doing, I happened to glance out of the window. And in the phone booth directly opposite down on the street below I saw a figure. My conclusion struck me with all the force of a million gale—this was the man. Yes, this was the guy. He just couldn't resist dialing my number from a nearby phone booth so that, when I answered, he'd experience the exquisite, ecstatic thrill of actually witnessing the explosion.

I started moving. Quickly. I went down these stairs three at a time. I dashed across the street telling myself that if I tore the phone away from him and found that all he was getting was the dialing tone then I'd be pretty certain I had the right man, not conclusively, mark you, but enough to set me working on him. I snatched the door of the booth open. A little man with watery

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shows only one sample of his craft behind him.

The reason for this, once you reflect on it, is obvious — if the victim doesn't discover one of the traps, well, he's soon trying on a pair of wings for use or guessing

up for his shovel, depending on the kind of life he's led. And if by some chance one of the traps doesn't work, on the law of averages the other will, just supposing the victim's a smart character, a suspicious one. He sniffs around until he finds what he's afraid he will find — a booby-trap. He disconnects it. Then he sits back and lets his relief cast its comforting blanket around him. After a while he may even start congratulating himself on his cleverness at discovering the inlined device. And a short while after that, in the drowsy and unsuspecting state of mind, he walks right into the second trap.

That's what I had nearly done — walked right into the other trap which was bound to be there. I was still right in the chair, my eyes blinking worse than ever as the sweat continued to trickle down into them. Supposing the chair itself had been rigged? No, that was stupid — if it had been I would have been dead by now. Nevertheless, I slowly rose and examined it. After that I began to go over the still unexamined parts of the room inch by inch.

I had almost completed my checking when my eye fastened on the small radio I kept on a shelf. That would be it. Yes, the second one would be in that radio. Boy, when it came to being stupid I just about took the jerk pot — that damned radio should have been one of the very first things in the room to come under suspicion. I took a step toward it. Then I stopped — better finish checking the rest of the place first just to make sure. I did so. There was absolutely no other trap of any sort anywhere in the room. So it had to be the radio.

I removed the electrical plug from its socket and carefully — oh, so very carefully — lined the radio from its shelf and placed it on the table. I pulled up a chair and sat down. Then I gently with drew the four screws which held the cardboard backing. As I removed this backing I immediately spotted the charge and detonator. The latter was wired to the ON/OFF switch. All I had needed to do to blow myself to oblivion was to switch on the radio.

I was trembling now. To such an extent that I had to stop for

a few seconds to get a grip on myself. When I had managed to do so I dismantled the booby mechanism. I then put it all in a drawer together with the explosive, detonator, etc which had been packed in the phone. I'd dispose of that later, in the river.

But sometimes I needed, a drunk, really. I prodded myself a large toe. Then I sat down. I had some deep thinking to do before I made my move. The move which, I hoped, would reveal who had planted these two booby-traps.

An hour later I had my list of suspects narrowed down to three. A list of three composed partly by deduction and partly by hunch. In my heart I felt that one of these three people was the booby-trap.

My Number One suspect was Josef Stowinski. A Pole, now nab nailed, who'd fought, I knew, with General Anders in Italy where he had been something of an expert in demolition. I also knew one or two other things about Stowinski. These, added to one important fact, made him my Number One candidate. That fact was that he was absolutely on his beam ends literally and had let it be known in certain circles that he was so desperate that he'd do anything for money. And by "anything" I meant just that. Yet, Stowinski was top of the lot all right. There were one or two of the Big Boys who'd surely love to see me out of the way — and he was just the man they'd most likely hire to effect this.

Subject Number Two was Peter Jarrow. I'd first met him during the war, in Egypt. We were retreating fast then, before Rommel's Africa Corps. And in this retreat Jarrow's main function was the laying of booby-traps to delay the advancing Germans. A cool, darkish type he was then, and I found myself admiring him for his courage. I'd met him again later when, under Montgomery, we were knocking the Germans for six. He was still on booby-traps but now he was searching for the things in order to dismantle them. That was the last I saw of him during the war.

When I met him next he was in deep, but really deep, with Anderson's crowd. And to be part of Anderson's setup you had to be a truly rotten member of the Human race. My previous admiration for him was, therefore, replaced by a profound contempt. A contempt which I expressed quite openly when I heard of some of the jobs he'd done for Anderson. Nameless, dirty jobs.

Maybe you think all this should have put Jarrow to the top of my list. And it would have. Had it not been for the fact that I had never crossed Anderson — and I didn't think Jarrow would try to kill me just because I'd openly displayed my contempt for him. Now if he'd been in Farrell's organization, or in De Soto's, well, he would have

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drove to my place ostensibly to collect some. When I suggested he come up for a quick drink he demurred.

"Come on," I realized, "it won't take a minute. Besides, we're a bit early for a nightcap, ready?"

He was pretty cool. He saw I'd be suspicious of something or another if he continued to refuse, so he came.

"Sit down there," I invited, indicating the chair by the radio. "And let's have some music while I pour out the drink, eh?"

For the first time I saw a flicker of fear pass across his eyes.

"There's nothing much on," he said as casually as possible.

"Don't be deaf," I grinded to him. "At this time of night there is always plenty of dance music." I made a quick move toward the set. "Just you listen."

"Not!" His hand intercepted mine before it could reach the ON-OFF switch. His face was suddenly

"Why?" I was no longer grinning. "Incidentally, Jarrow," I added, "I like it if you wouldn't want me to answer the phone if it rings, would you?" At least, not while you're present!" As I said this I switched on the radio set.

He caught on immediately. And he knew that any attempt at denial would be a waste of breath. "Well, what are you going to do about it?" he asked. His face wasn't so采访 now.

"Get you to talk, Jarrow," I answered.

"You'll have quite a job on your hands."

"Maybe," I said and I turned up the volume as loud as it would go. Then I started working on him. In so far as he talked. He talked plenty. Mainly about the plans of his new employer, a certain Big Boy, to effect a massive take-over & take-over which would crush all opposition. Mine included.

I got Jarrow bundled out of town in double-time. I also effected certain arrangements to ensure that his return could not be an early one — I didn't want him to tip off his new boss that I was wise to everything. Because I had some plans to formulate which were going to concern this Big Boy. Mainly.

But before I got down to all this I wanted to see Jacqueline Morelle first. Maybe it was because of a form of guilt-complex on my part for even suspecting her of rigging up those booby-traps. Maybe it was because I had once been on very friendly terms with her and singly told, as a result of thinking about her, that I'd like to pick up our former association again. So I called to see her at the nightspot where she was doing her act. She had just finished when I got there. We engaged in some chit-chat which culminated in me offering to drive her home. This she accepted. I meant to do just that — drive her to her apartment.

On the way there, I suddenly found myself asking her if she'd like to come up to my place for a drink. She gave every appearance of being taken aback by the suggestion. After a couple of shorts I put down my glass and took her in my arms. But I didn't kiss her — she kissed me passionately. And, while we were thus occupied, the phone rang.

"Forget it, darling," she whispered into my ear. "Let the thing ring."

A horrible little herb of suspicion grabbed into my thoughts. "Maybe it's somebody important," I heard myself reply.

"More important than me, darling?" Her lips were brushing against mine. "Let the silly phone ring to itself as long as it likes." Her kiss — a deep, searing kiss — acted as a sort of portal to her innocence detecting that discussion of the matter was now closed.

But to me it wasn't. My suspicion had grown to such an extent that I couldn't be dismissed — my suspicion that Jarrow, despite the beatings he'd got, had either lied on, which was more likely, again revealed that she too was implicated in some way or another. I unsnug her arms from around my neck and stood up.

Her eyes were wide. "What's wrong, darling?"

"I'll tell you just in a tick," I said. "But in the meantime turn on that radio there for me, will you?"

"Why? Oh, Steve, you are acting very strangely."

"Never mind how I'm acting." My words were practically ground out. "Just turn on that radio."

She rose. Her eyes were fleshing. "I think you must be drunk. Or mad. Or maybe even both." She suddenly turned and switched on the set. "Right! There you are! And as far as I am concerned you can listen to your precious radio for —" Her words were cut off, as I quickly moved forward and kissed her.

The open hand which took me viciously across the face hurt badly. "You pig!"

But before she could leave I had the explosives, the detonators, the wiring, all out for her to see. And I was talking. Talking fast, trying to cover up a matter of seconds all that had happened. She listened, still standing. When I had finished, still standing. When I had finished, still quietly and evenly. "And you suspected even me?"

I nodded reluctantly. "I did."

I made no attempt to avoid the second swing of that open hand, but it didn't hurt. Just short of my face, the swing stopped and the movement turned into a caressing one. It was accompanied by a kiss. A long, hungry kiss.

And very shortly after, I'd forgotten all about that hand and leg.

In fact, I'd forgotten all about well-nigh everything . . .

CAP THE KILLER — OR DIE!

(Continued from page 29)

"Just once it all it needs, one spark, from one little spot we trained with the oil . . ."

"But we've got to get the control-hand out—"

"That's right. But I just want to make one more try." Kilpatrick went on patiently. "I want to get it done and do it right. It's a tough one we won't do it if we have to come up every couple of seconds to get fresh air. So we've got to figure a way we can stay in there till the damn job gets done."

Thoroughly mystified, I accompanied Jim Kilpatrick on a quick trip to the field warehouse, where we picked up a portable blower with a double air hose he remembered had been there. The hose was about six feet in length, three inches in diameter.

I thought Jim had taken in too much gas in his lungs and was getting silly. If he meant to blow out the collar under the rig, he could never do it with that little hose, and he certainly couldn't do it till we capped the gasses. But I kept my thoughts to myself, and it was just as well. That wasn't what Jim had in mind at all.

When we got back to the rig Jim stationed one of the workmen on the floor above to keep the blower going and pass the hose through the floor to us. The men below would take turns grabbing gulps from the hose — much as a skin diver today can help a body whose lungs have been blown away by keeping his breaths from his own air supply.

"How long will we stay in there?" Ryan asked.

"As long as it takes to finish the threading," Kilpatrick told him.

"What the heck?" I remembered thinking. "How long can it take? Three minutes? Five minutes?"

Till never forgot that roar of gas blasting in my ears as together with the other men of the roundabout gang I crawled over the narrow casing, tugging and heaving at that control-head valve, and wondering if at any mo-

ment an accidental spark was about to blow me into oblivion.

The minutes ticked by while we tugged and tugged and adjusted, balanced and aligned and turned to get those threads started. We tugged and started again from the beginning, and again the threads failed to catch, the head would not turn.

The mouth of the air hose passed from man to man, each holding handfuls of the life-giving air only slightly less foul than the poisonous stuff that crowded around us — but that difference, between life and death.

After 15 minutes in the dense atmosphere of the collar, my head ached and I felt nauseous and sick. At the same time I had to stifle an uncontrollable impulse to laugh. I looked around and I could see all the men with me had the same look of wild strain. Even with the air hose from above, the polluted air we breathed took its deadly effect.

Next to giving way to hysteria and the gathering fits of the "gas-gag" nervousness, I had the impulse to break and run — to just get up and get out of there before I gave way and did something rash enough to result in my own death. It's hard to say what held that gang of men together, most of them strangers to each other prior to that year, unless it was the personality of Jim Kilpatrick, who continued to work steadily and evenly as the minutes we spent in the collar lengthened.

I took another gasp from the air hose and my head cleared a little. Jim Kilpatrick signalled again to hit the control-head, we balanced it, and I pitched it. Together we jumped and balanced exactly as we had already done a dozen or more times, and suddenly the valve seemed to jump under my hands. The threads had caught. We had her in perfect alignment.

Jim Kilpatrick signalled again, and we started the first slow turn of the control-head on the casing. The threads started and the head slowly, ponderously turned into place.

The look of satisfaction that passed from face to face of those three, half-crazed men did not come from grecianism, and it was more than relief, it was a triumph. But suddenly snuffed. When the valve head was down tight, we took another gulp of air apiece. The foul air pumped down from above even seemed to taste better.

Jim Kilpatrick started the closing of the heavy strong valve on the control-head.

The whistling roar of the un-supplied gas suddenly tapered off, and the comparative silence that replaced it struck us all like a clap of thunder.

We all looked at each other again. Kilpatrick nodded his head and we started out. We went fast.

Anything that happened then could have been an accident.

But I was sure it was no accident when I got another heavy blow in my ribs and my mouth opened involuntarily and gasped for breath in that foul atmosphere of the collar.

The last thing I knew was a feeling of surprise and fury as I realised what had happened. I looked around at Charley Ryan's grimacing face and then blotted out. When I recovered outside, Ryan's face bending over me anxiously was the first thing I could focus on.

I struggled to my feet.

"You tried to kill me," I complained.

"I don't know what you're talking about. Anyhow, I didn't mean you to get hurt," Ryan said. He looked away from me and grimaced kind of stupidly.

I didn't wait. I caught him with two hands in the middle of his stupid snark and plastered it all over his face.

Nobody tried to keep us apart. After the stink of what I had gone through in that collar, and then the blow in the ribs, I don't think anybody could have stopped me then anyhow.

I never put such a bad beating in my life as I got from Charley Ryan that day.

I didn't hurt him much, either. But I kept coming off the ground.

The last time I came off the ground I had a rock in my fist, and I broke open the back of his head with it.

Charley Ryan and I spent a couple of hours in the infirmary. Nobody said anything about a fight. Jim Kilpatrick reported it as a "work accident", and no questions were asked.

Charley Ryan and I didn't exactly become close friends, but strangely enough we got along pretty well, the old antagonism wearing off about as fast as the bruises from the fight did.

What had been a group of individual tired bums had now welded into an effective working force with a common feeling of pride in the work we did and a real spirit of all-for-one and one-for-all.

What surprised more to me, I had wondered my last mission and I now had as rightful a place in the work gang as any man who had ever been there. I felt I had been accepted as an equal by the men I worked with.

The rest of the time I spent in Bergen with that roundabout crew around a lot of sweat and hard work, and there were more dangerous jobs.

But I took back all it now and share of Jim Kilpatrick and Charley Ryan and Poldice and the rest, and I know it was as happy a time as I'll ever spend in my life . . .

LONELY MEN



By Freda Blythe, Red Book Magazine, London, England. From *Red Book Magazine* 1938. These girls went to the scenes of great disasters. Some of these girls are the best with whom there is to be found. Some of them have been married to the girls of "Gold" devices, but keep the confidential details to themselves.

"Women and Troubles!"
GIA BOLDWELL POPE, Agent
for "The Red Bookmarked," Sydney.



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